

CROSS-BORDER FATHERING:
THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF MEXICAN IMMIGRANT FATHERS

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DEDICATION

This research study is dedicated to my father, *Bernabe Navarro*. He was and continues to be a role model in ways that neither he nor I ever imagined.

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Dr. Irene Queiro-Tajalli was the first professor I met when I first came to the IU School of Social Work in 1996. I knew then that I was home at this school. With her, I have discovered and shared a global view of the human experience that permeates through my work. During my senior year in the BSW program, Dr. Margaret Adamek noticed my potential as an investigator, concerned with the rights of children diagnosed with mental disorders, and encouraged me to want to know more. My first mentor in the doctoral program was Dr. Gerald Powers. One day, he pointed out to me that I had already found my niche within the realm of scientific inquiry: the plea of the immigrant. Although we never worked together before, Dr. Patrick Sullivan believed in me from the first day I approached him with this project. His high standards, his passion, and his encouragement kept me focused on the task at hand. He urged me to maintain scientific rigor and to produce work of which I should be proud. Dr. Hea-Won Kim led me into the field of psychological stress and coping and, without knowing it, helped me evolve as a human being, a practitioner, and an investigator. During the completion of my coursework in Nursing, Dr. Sara Horton-Deutsch became a mentor. Throughout this project, she remained a gentle but challenging force that thrust me into exploring and articulating the lived experience of the Mexican immigrant father on a higher level of insight and philosophical thinking.

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ABSTRACT

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This phenomenological study explores the lived experience of Mexican immigrant fathers who migrate to and settle in the United States initially alone and eventually bring the rest of their families from Mexico to join them permanently. This project explores fathers' understanding of their fathering efforts along the journey of migration; from departure from Mexico to family resettlement in the U.S. There is a conspicuous paucity of research focusing on the fathering experience among these men. In addition, negative stereotypes about the Mexican men in general abound. Thus, this study clarifies and contributes to the existing knowledge about these men. Fifteen Mexican immigrant fathers participated in the study through extensive qualitative interviews and field observation. Interviews were carried out in Spanish, audio taped, and simultaneously translated and transcribed into English. Data were treated through the process of phenomenological reduction. Nine core themes emerged: (1) fathers immigrate to rescue their families from poverty and fulfill what they perceive to be their roles as breadwinners; (2) they could not embark upon this journey without the support of family and kin in both countries; (3) they sacrifice themselves and their families as well; (4) despite the geographical distance, their fathering efforts involve much more than providing for their children; (5) they vow to ensure that neither they nor their families would ever experience certain risks again; (6) once in the U.S., they experience a type of poverty they did not anticipate; (7) due to immigration policy, the border is never left behind; (8) the role of the wife is significant throughout the father's experience; and (9) despite the challenges experienced, fathers recognize and appreciate the gains from their decisions to engage in cross-border fathering. The essence of the phenomenon

involves the recognition that although the Mexico - U.S. border is left behind after crossing the border, the father never stops crossing familial, social, and psychological borders. As a triangulation strategy, five professionals with significant experience working with Mexican immigrant families were also interviewed. Implications for practice, education, research, and policy are identified and discussed. Questions about the future of this population group are raised.

William Patrick Sullivan, Ph.D., Chair

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Phenomenon of Interest

In her book “Borderlands,” Anzaldua (1999) compares the Mexican - United States border to an open wound, a place where “the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merge to form a third country – a border culture” (p. 25). Perhaps, such evocation cannot be associated to any other relationship between nations in today’s world. *La frontera* (the border) conjures up an array of mixed emotions, ranging from apprehension and courage to anger and hope, especially among those of Mexican ancestry. In fact, García (1985) notes that after more than a century and a half of shared history, the U.S. - Mexican border still continues to influence the Mexican-American experience to such extent that it has established itself as a persistent theme across generations of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans of all ages who dream of crossing it sooner or later. For many Mexicans, la frontera offers a path into a world of desired opportunities that they hope would come through. It also opens the door to unknown challenges, not unlike the journey of any immigrant. To be the neighbors of the world’s richest nation does not offer Mexicans any preferential treatment but the contrary. Yet, waves of Mexican immigrants continue to arrive and settle in the U.S. in increasing numbers in search of employment and better living conditions for themselves and their children. Degado Wise and Márquez Covarrubias (2008) note:

The Mexico-United States migratory system has one of the longest histories and highest levels of dynamism in the world. Certain factors such as the countries’ proximity (their common border, with a length in excess of 3,000 km, is the most frequently crossed on the planet), unidirectional flows (98% of Mexican emigration is to the United States), and the sheer volumes involved (Mexico’s annual exodus is the largest in the world). (p. 113)

The aforementioned facts are poignant descriptions of the effect of migration in Mexico and, therefore, in the U.S. Mexicans alone constitute the largest immigrant group in the U.S., comprising nearly 70% of the total Latino immigrant population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). In 2006, there were 11.5 million foreign-born individuals from Mexico living in the U.S. but this was not the case 30 years ago. This population group increased dramatically since 1980, when the decennial census counted 2.2 million Mexican immigrants (Batalova, 2008). Up until 1980, the foreign born from Mexico ranked behind foreign-born groups from Europe and Canada in terms of size, but this trend was soon to change in the next decade. During the 1990s, the immigrant population in the U.S. grew by 11.3 million, faster than any other time in history. Mexico accounted for 43% of the growth of the immigrant population between 1990 and 2000 (Camarota & McArdle, 2003).

A trend that deserves special attention is the male/female ratio observed in this immigrant group. In 1997, the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) reported that the majority of Mexican immigrants were males, with an estimated 90% of them immigrating without their families. Today, Mexican immigrant men continue to outnumber women. Of all Mexican immigrants residing in the country in 2006, 55.9% were men while women accounted for 44.1% (Hill, 2004; Batalova, 2008). Gender ratios in new areas of settlement still show a large proportion of males compared to females, especially fathers immigrating and settling without their families (Duran & Massey, 1992; Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática (INEGI), 2004). Eventually, spouses, their children, and often relatives follow fathers and the families are once again reunited in the U.S. It is not surprising then that newest areas of settlement for Mexicans exhibit gender ratios where men are the majority until the gender composition in that location changes with the *maturity* of the flow, that is, according to Durand and Massey,

when he is joined by the rest of his family. Undoubtedly, this trend is an invitation to answer many research questions. The possible foci are many.

Among scholars and policy observers, there is increased interest in immigration and, Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the U.S. – as evidenced by a growing number of research efforts in the last few decades. However, Mexican immigrant men have been traditionally misrepresented and forgotten, especially in the fatherhood scholarship and research literature (Cabrera & García-Coll, 2004; González-López, 2004; Mirandé, 1997) despite the fact that many of them immigrate alone. Questions about their welfare, survival, and transborder family dynamics are called for. The focus of this study is the experience of the Mexican immigrant father, encompassing his departure from Mexico, leaving his family behind, crossing the border, and settling in the U.S. from where he supports his family and lays the foundation to reunite with them when possible.

Purpose of the Study

This study focuses on a particular form of father involvement observed among many Mexican immigrant fathers who migrate to and settle in the U.S. initially alone. Eventually, they create the appropriate conditions to bring the rest of the family from Mexico to join them permanently. It explores fathers' appraisal of their fathering efforts along the journey of migration and is guided by the grand tour question (Creswell, 1994; Spradly & McCurdy, 1972): How do Mexican immigrant fathers who initially migrate alone and eventually reunite with their families in the U.S. perceive and describe their experiences? This research provides new insights about these fathers in the U.S. supporting their children's well-being and healthy development in Mexico, while simultaneously preparing to bring those families with them. Hence, this study refers to this phenomenon as *cross-border fathering*.

Justification for Studying the Phenomenon

Despite the unparalleled gratification of having given life to and growing older with a child, being a parent also involves making difficult choices and sacrifices. For Mexican immigrant fathers who come to the U.S. without their families seeking better life opportunities, their choices and sacrifices may pose irreversible negative consequences. Many are undocumented; therefore, problems with the law, imprisonment, and even death are possible. The overriding assumption of this research study is that the Mexican immigrant father – just like most fathers – fulfills several everyday-like roles, namely: member of the community, worker, provider, nurturer, neighbor, and friend, just to name a few. However, these roles are impinged upon by the experiences of immigration and separation from his loved ones; thus, the successful accomplishment of his fathering efforts is unquestionably challenging. Given the number of Mexican fathers immigrating to and living in the U.S. without their families, this study – and further studies with this population – are necessary to expand our knowledge on the relationship between fatherhood and migration to the U.S. when migration is perceived as a viable option to sustain the family.

This study describes the essence of cross-border fathering as experienced and told by fifteen Mexican immigrant fathers in the U.S. With the purpose of exploring fathers' awareness of the phenomenon of cross-border fathering and identifying experiences common to all of them, a qualitative analysis of data was conducted by using an empirical phenomenological approach. The goal of phenomenology is to reveal the essence or invariant structure of a phenomenon, to render a description that typifies the experiences of all the participants involved (Moustakas, 1994). In phenomenological terms, what manifests in consciousness is the phenomenon. The final report of this study is completed in thick description and rich detail, and enlightens scholars, practitioners, educators, and policy-makers who might deem the findings transferable to

similar cohorts. Before proceeding with to the literature review and matters of epistemology and theory, a discussion of terms used in this study follows.

Definition of Terms

Despite the fact that both *qualitative inquiry* and *phenomenology* are widely used terms in the scholarly literature, it is important to define them by virtue of their usage in this study. Other terms deserve to be operationalized as well. Concepts such as *Mexican*, *immigrant*, and *father* often carry misconceptions and value-based connotations, making the understanding of this particular social group difficult at best, stereotypical and intolerant at worst.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative inquiry “is often used as an umbrella term for various orientations to interpretivist research” (Glesne, 1999, p. 2), such as ethnography, case study, biography, and phenomenology, among others. McRoy (1999) clarifies that while quantitative research is characterized by the use of large samples, standardized measures, and a deductive approach, qualitative research relies on non-statistical methods of inquiry and analysis, using “detailed descriptions from the perspective of the research participants themselves as a means of examining specific issues and problems under study”

(p. 2009). In qualitative methods, characterized by an inductive approach, data are collected from interviews, observations, videotapes, case studies, and artifacts.

Qualitative approaches have several advantages. Epstein (1988) regards descriptive, inductive, and unobtrusive data collection techniques as compatible with the values of the social work profession, bearing strong similarities with clinical social work assessments. Clinicians gather information on a client’s situation within the context of the environment, making observations of each case individually without making generalizations about clients facing the same challenge and without imposing

preconceived notions about the nature of the relationship between the client and the challenge (Gilgun, 1994). The reliance on qualitative methods in research in the social sciences has grown tremendously since the 1980s and continues to expand. This trend is evident in journals that provide an increasing number of methodologies: case studies, ethnographies, narratives, discourse analysis, symbolic interaction studies, literary journalism, and all types of hybrids (Huberman & Miles, 2002).

Phenomenology

A discussion of phenomenology deserves special attention in this study for it renders the philosophical tone of this endeavor. Phenomenology is a branch of philosophy concerned with understanding human existence. It is regarded by its pioneers and their disciples “as the proper foundation of all philosophy - as opposed, say, to ethics or metaphysics or epistemology” (Woodruff Smith, 2003, ¶ 2).

Phenomenology can be divided into three separate phases, which ultimately merge with existentialism. The first phase is represented by the writings of Franz Brentano (1838-1917) and Carl Stumpf (1848-1936). The second, usually known as the ‘German phase’ includes the influential ideas of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). The third phase acquired popularity in France in the mid 1940s, following World War II, and comprises the ideas of Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), and Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980) (Jones, 2001). Generally speaking, phenomenology is concerned with the study of human experience and the ways in which things present themselves to individuals. A phenomenological study brings to the investigator’s awareness the unique meanings given to a phenomenon by those he wants to know more about (Boss, Dahl, & Kaplan, 2005). Further, by becoming aware of certain phenomena, individuals and investigators alike gain understanding of themselves. As Sokolowski (2000) states: “not only can we think the things given to us in experience; we can also understand ourselves as thinking them” (p. 4).

Husserl and Heidegger: epistemology and ontology.

Although phenomenology has its roots in the 19th century, it comes to the forefront of western human thought in the 20th century, perhaps, as a response to the effects of the second industrial revolution and both war worlds. Husserl, Heidegger, and those who embrace their legacies are to influence contemporary philosophy and the social sciences forever. Despite the fact that Heidegger is Husserl's most salient disciple, the two of them display striking differences. Husserl's phenomenology stands out as 'cosmopolitan' thought, one that cuts across national boundaries, language, historical eras, and political ideologies. Following Descartes in his search for the foundation of knowledge, Husserl proposes a philosophy free of presuppositions and regards phenomenology as a rigorous, formal science (Owsley, 2000).

On the other hand, Heidegger espouses neither a multicultural view of the human experience nor a scientific view of philosophy. He develops his phenomenological approach in direct opposition to Cartesian thought and is inspired by the writings of St. Augustine and the existentialism of Kierkegaard. Not surprisingly Husserl is primarily an epistemologist, concerned with the nature of knowledge; while Heidegger is seen as an ontologist, preoccupied with the nature of being. Regardless of their differences, Husserl and Heidegger agreed on truth in four aspects: (1) primordial truth begins with a revelation of the condition of consciousness, (2) truth emerges in the description of experience, (3) subjectivity must be considered, and (4) truth is the gathering phenomena and the disclosure of interpretation rather than the enumeration of facts and the construction of explanations (Owsley, 2000).

Sartre and existentialism.

At the end of World War II, phenomenology gained momentum in France, a time at which Sartre spearheaded the 'third phase of phenomenology' (Jones, 2001). At first, his philosophy is influenced by his experiences in the French resistance during the war.

Later, he develops a more rigorous and scholarly approach to his thinking. Finally, he draws from the ideas of Husserl, Heidegger, and also Karl Marx. It is through this evolution that he proposes that human existence is characterized by reflection, freedom, choice, and human responsibility. Sartre's (1993/1943) ideas are concerned with personal freedom. He believes that an individual's existence is not separate but related to others. He proposes a two-fold understanding of the concept of Being: being *in-itself* (a simple type of existence, not conscious, and devoid of any potential for potential for transcendence) and being *for-itself* (the transcendent being characterized by consciousness and freedom). The latter is understood as the being of a conscious individual, one who defines his own essence and gives meaning to his own existence through the choices he makes. Sartre maintains that there are many truths and limitless meanings.

Merleau-Ponty: body and consciousness.

For Merleau-Ponty the locus of truth and meaning is no longer to be sought in the mind with its phenomenal limitation or in a coincidence of mind and object but in language and bodily gesture (Mellon, 2003). Merleau-Ponty rejects the objectivism of empirical psychology (van Manen, 2000) and understands the body as a meaning-giving existence, even if the individual is not yet conscious of its meaning-giving activity. Merleau-Ponty (1962/2003) develops the concept of the body-subject as an alternative to the Cartesian cogito, or the philosophic principle that one's existence is demonstrated by the fact that one thinks. This distinction is especially important in that Merleau-Ponty perceives the essences of the world existentially, as opposed to the Cartesian idea that the world is merely an extension of our own minds. Consciousness, the world, and the human body as a perceiving entity are intricately interwoven and mutually engaged.

Phenomenon.

The central concept under study by the investigator is referred to as 'phenomenon.' It is the concept being experienced by the participants selected for a research study (Creswell, 1998). The word phenomenon derives from the Greek *phaenesthai*, which means 'to flare up, to show itself,' or to appear. Constructed from the word *phaino*, "phenomenon means to bring to light, to place in brightness, to show itself in itself, the totality of what lies before us in the light of day" (Heidegger, 1977, p. 75). In this study, the phenomenon is identified as: the lived experience of Mexican immigrant fathers residing in the U.S. who initially immigrate alone and eventually bring the rest of the family with them or, as this study refers to it: cross-border fathering.

Other relevant concepts.

Another significant term closely associated with phenomenology is 'intentionality,' or the recognition that every act of consciousness individuals engage in, every experience that they have, is intentional: it is essentially *consciousness of* (or an experience of) something or another person. Awareness is entirely directed towards objects and others whether they are present or not. The fact that humans seek to uncover varied aspects and concrete meanings in reality is due to their nature: "man [*sic*] is always and necessarily intentional; he is orientation, directedness to the world, he is potential openness for all that is" (van Kaam, 1969, p. 70). Sartre (1993/1943) identifies intentionality with consciousness, arguing that they are indistinguishable from one another, a position that is in stark contrast to other views arguing that intentionality is but one quality of mental phenomena. Heidegger (1962/1936) introduces the concept of *Dasein*, an entity or aspect of the individual's humanness that is capable of wondering about its own existence and inquiring into its own being; a being always engaged in the world. *Dasein's* intentionality is understood by Heidegger as *Sorge* (care or concern); an attentive quality with which an individual's existentiality identifies his ontological

significance. In other words, the connectedness that human beings experience with the world is through concern. Similar to Husserl's (1982/1913) idea of the life-world, the world 'as already there,' 'pre-given,' and free of theoretical reflection, Heidegger also introduces the concept of *thrownness*, or 'the givens in life;' those personal circumstances that characterize a person's existence over which he has no control.

The preceding exploration on the advent and development of phenomenology is rather extensive as a definition of a concept. However, it is highly relevant and necessary because the philosophers and the terms they coined and defined resurface in the discussion of findings.

Immigrant

Definitions of *immigrant* and *refugee* vary depending on whether these individuals are being discussed in the social sciences or in legal terms. The social science literature refers to them as the *foreign-born population*, a term commonly used by the U.S. Census Bureau. Although both immigrants and refugees are understood as those born in one country and settled in another, a basic and general distinction between the two is that immigrants leave their countries voluntarily while refugees are forced to do so as a result of life-threatening socio-environmental conditions. However, it is the investigator's contention that – because many immigrants around the world leave their home countries in order to survive and provide for their loved ones – the distinction among concepts such as *immigrant*, *displaced person*, and *refugee* are less obvious than they seem to be.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2004) defines as *alien* a person who is neither a citizen nor a national of the U.S. Alien is classified as either *immigrant* or *non-immigrant*, the former being a person who has been granted authorization to enter the country and reside here, and the latter being a person who intends to stay temporarily, such as a tourist or a student. Aliens are further classified into documented

and undocumented aliens, depending on whether or not they are granted a legal right to be in the U.S. (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002). Often, these individuals are also referred to as *illegal immigrants* or *deportable aliens*, which the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2004) defines as “any alien illegally in the United States, regardless of whether the alien entered the country by fraud or misrepresentation or entered legally but subsequently violated the terms of his or her non-immigrant classification or status” (Glossary and acronyms section, ¶ 4).

Although this research study focuses on Mexican immigrant fathers, it did not seek to identify and recruit particularly either documented or undocumented immigrants. That could be perceived by the participants as a violation of their privacy, and might interfere with sampling procedures and the rapport-building process. In this study the term *immigrant* refers to those individuals who entered the country with the purpose of residing either permanently or temporarily but eventually decided to reside in the U.S. permanently.

Fathering

Despite differences among cultural and ethnic groups when referring to the experience of being a father, ‘investment’ appears to be a constant concept across cultures. In 1972, Trivers introduced the term ‘parental investment,’ which he defines as “any investment by the parent in an individual offspring that increases the offspring’s chance of surviving” (p. 139). Parental investment can be provided by the father, the mother, or both. A myriad of empirical and theoretical works have enriched the literature on fatherhood since then. Dollahite and Hawkins (1998) emphasize the difference between *fatherhood* and *fathering*, and clarify that the former is a concept used to describe what fathers are expected to accomplish and be, while the latter describes what fathers actually do, say, think, feel, and desire. Therefore, this study is concerned with the experience of fathering, which is a holistic view of the father’s experience.

Highlighting the role of the social context in the experience of fathering, Lamb and Tamis-LeMonda (2004) note: “historical, cultural, and familial ideologies inform the roles fathers play and undoubtedly shape the absolute amounts of time fathers spend with their children, the activities they shape with them, and perhaps even the quality of the father-child relationship (p. 3).” Congruently, Pleck and Pleck (1997) suggest that as cultural definitions of manhood and fatherhood have shifted historically, so have men’s identities and self-definitions of performance and fulfillment within the family. Thus, the study of fathering continues to evolve in a world in which self-perceived views of fathering collide with those prescribed by society. Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, and Levine (1985) propose that paternal involvement is comprised of three components: (1) paternal engagement, or direct interaction with the child, in the form of caretaking or play; (2) accessibility, or being available for the child; and (3) responsibility, or making sure that the child is well taken care of and locating resources for the child.

Mexican

The fastest growing ethnic minority group in the U.S. is in search of a name, claims Comas-Díaz (2003). This poignant statement sums up the scholarly literature’s ongoing struggle to refer to those of Mexican descent. To begin with, many names are currently in use to refer to Latinos: *Hispanics* (a panethnic label), *Latinos/Latinas*, *La Raza*, *Hispano(a)*, *Spanish People*, and *Americano(a)*. Similarly, when referring to Mexicans, several terms are often used: *Mexican*, *Mexican-American*, *Chicano(a)*, and *Xicano(a)*.

Oftentimes, studies exploring various phenomena among Latino groups refer to participants as *Latino*, *Hispanic*, *Mexican* or *Mexican American* interchangeably though it is not always clear whether the sample was comprised of Mexican immigrants or U.S.-born citizens of Mexican ancestry. Surprisingly, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2005) provides three different and contradicting definitions of Mexican: (1) a native or

inhabitant of Mexico; (2) a person of Mexican descent; and (3) a person of mixed Spanish and Indian descent. Official definitions such as this one contribute to greater confusion among laypersons and researchers alike, with resulting confounding and construct validity issues. In this study, the term Mexican refers to an individual born in Mexico.

The purpose of the study has been introduced, along with a rationale for studying the phenomenon of cross-border fathering; namely, the relationship between fathering and migration, which is perceived as a feasible alternative to support the family when no significant or solid opportunities are available in Mexico.

Significance of the Phenomenon of Cross-border Fathering

Between 1990 and 2000, the Latino population in the U.S. increased by 57.9%, from 22.4 million to 35.3 million, compared with an increase of 13% for the total U.S. population (Guzmán, 2001). By July 2003, this population group reached 40 million (Bernstein, 2004). The Latino population is already the nation's largest ethnic minority group. Estimates from the Pew Hispanic Center (2008) indicate that this group will triple in size and will account for most of the nation's population growth from 2005 through 2050. Consequently, Latinos will make up 29% of the U.S. population in 2050, compared with 14% in 2005. Among Latinos, Mexicans constitute the largest group. According to the U.S. Census (2004) the number of U.S. residents of Mexican origin in 2003 was 25.3 million, or nine percent of the nation's total population. Not only do Mexicans comprise the largest foreign-born group, but also the largest group of undocumented immigrants. As of March 2005, the undocumented population reached nearly 11 million including more than 6 million Mexicans (Passel, 2005). The fact that so many Mexican immigrants reside in the U.S. without legal status compound the factors that make this an at-risk population group by virtue of the minimum and often unlikely access to legal, health, and education resources.

The rapid growth of the Latino population in general has captured the attention of the research community, especially in the last decades of the twentieth century. There is a plethora of empirical and conceptual literature on Latinos and Mexican-Americans, with several works with Mexican individuals and families surfacing. There is growing interest in the fields of nursing, psychiatry, psychology and social work in the relationship between acculturation and mental health (Escobar, Hoyos Nervi, & Gara, 2000; Hovey, 2000; Rogler, Cortes, & Malgady, 1991; Vega, Sribney, Aguilar-Gaxiola, & Kolody, 2004); acculturation and substance use (Alderete, Vega, Kolody, & Aguilar-Gaxiola, 2000; Amaro, Whitaker, Coffman, & Heeren, 1990; Caetano, 1987; Ortega, Rosenheck, Alegría, & Desai, 2000; Ramirez, Crano, Quist, Burgoon, Alvaro, & Grandpre, 2004; Vega, Kolody, Aguilar-Gaxiola, Alderete, Catalano, & Caraveo-Anduaga, 1998); struggles of Mexican parents in the public school system (Olivos, 2004); clinical social work and Chicanos (Brown, 1979); clinical interventions with Mexican families (Galán, 2001); and undocumented Mexican families (Salcido, 1979), among others. A brief look at these studies reveals that, although highly relevant, they are plagued by a medical model framework, an approach to illness dominant in Western medicine. Its focus on diagnosed symptoms and syndromes often overshadows other significant aspects of an individual's experience and health, such as his intrinsic and socioenvironmental resources. In the face of such diagnostic paradigm, one wants to know what other aspects, inherent to Mexicans, comprise their rich cultural experience in Mexico and in the U.S.

Protective Factors and Strengths

As observed among most Latin American cultures, Mexican families are drawn together by a commitment to close-knit family attachments and tend to form connections that support marriage, bind siblings, extend across generations, and incorporate relatives, compadrazco or *padrinos* and *madrinas* (male and female godparents), and

kinship, which in many cases is perceived as more important than compadrazgo (Ebaugh & Curry, 2000). A strong identification with and attachment of individuals to their families has been associated with Latino culture in general (Mirandé & Enriques, 1979; Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, Marin, & Perez-Stable, 1987; Ybarra, 1988; Vega, 1990). This commitment to family life, referred to as *familism*, is a defining source of strength in this population.

According to Keefe and Padilla (1987), Mexican familism manifests in three areas of family life: extended kin ties, fertility, and traditional gender roles. Studies exploring kinship networks of Caucasian and Mexican-born women in the U.S. show that the kinship ties of Mexicans are more intensive and extensive than that of Caucasians'. Compared to other groups, Mexicans prefer a higher intensity of face-to-face contact with family members and are more likely to perceive the family as a source of support (Harris, Firestone, & Vega, 2005). However, there is evidence indicating that the behaviors and attitudes associated with strong familism weaken with increased contact with U.S. mainstream culture (Firestone & Harris, 1994; Garza & Gallegos, 1995; Harris & Firestone, 1997; Jasinski, 1998). As more acculturated individuals exhibit less traditional gender role expectations, they become more similar to U.S. society in general (Harris & Firestone, 1998; Wildsmith, 2004).

Overall, collectivism and the regard for *la familia* (the family) are pervasive across virtually all sub-groups and represent significant aspects of the Mexican worldview. The shared experience of migration to a new country increases adherence to family ties because family connections support survival and healthy adjustment (Surgeon General, 2000). The decision to migrate is interrelated with other life-course transitions such as the completion of school, marriage, the search for employment (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994), and other goals centered around the family and its survival. Salgado de Snyder (1987) and Hovey and King (1996) highlight the significance of

emotional closeness within the Mexican family for ameliorating the negative impact of acculturation. Depictions of Mexican families usually portray them as cohesive, almost enmeshed, and emphasize their strong sense of mutual support, (Sabogal et al., 1987). Hovey (2000) highlights the role of Catholicism, particularly church attendance, as a protective factor against suicidal ideation.

Extended family living arrangements represent a strong asset of this group, a strategy for caring for young children and older adults. Blank and Torecilha (1998) note that Mexican immigrants are more willing to welcome the benefits and accept the inconveniences presented by sharing a home with members of their extended family. It is also common for immigrants of the same towns in Mexico to find tight bonds with one another in the U.S. and be deeply committed to mutual support and protection (Suro, 1998), including economic support that allows immigrants who do not qualify for public assistance to maintain living standards over poverty (Glick, 1999).

When considering the vital roles of the family, godparents, and kinship in Mexican culture, it is inevitable not to ponder on the forces that compel families to leave such strong and comfortable sense of belonging and community. In fact, while visiting Mexico, the investigator had the opportunity to have informal conversations with a few Mexican males, some of which were fathers. Surprisingly, none of them agreed that they would like to move to the U.S. Two of them indicated that they had already lived here and had no interest in returning because they felt satisfied with their lives in Mexico. However, over a million Mexican immigrants entered the U.S. between 1990 and 1995 (INEGI, 2004), mostly men without their families (PPIC, 1997). In 2000, almost 1.6 million Mexican men immigrated to the U.S., compared to 388,000 Mexican women (INEGI, 2003).

For men, migration is encouraged by opportunities for employment in the receiving country and/or a lack of opportunity in the place of origin. Mexican households

have traditionally sent men across the border to work in the U.S., while women usually stayed in Mexico (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). For at least the last 30 years, the balance of the sexes in the Mexican immigrant flow appears to stably split between 75 percent male and 25 percent female (Durand, Massey, & Zenteno, 2001). This is a significant pattern of Mexican migration that inevitably brings attention to the experience of Mexican immigrant males, particularly those who are fathers.

A Journeying Father

Within this expanding knowledge on Mexican culture and families, a single cohort is seldom explored: Mexican immigrant fathers. In fact, when these fathers are mentioned in research studies, they are identified and discussed as a variable relevant to other phenomena: Mexican men and their daughters' sexuality (González-López, 2004), father involvement in low-income Mexican American families (Coltrane, Parke, & Adams, 2004), the sexual victimization of Mexican women (Lira, Koss, & Russo, 1999), and patriarchy and gender relations (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992), among others. Moreover, until very recently, most of the fatherhood literature had been diseased with pervading methodological flaws, adopting a deficit lens to explore and assess father involvement.

Mexican immigration inflow is unlikely to end. On the contrary, it is expected to continue as a consequence of growing income inequality in Mexico. In fact, according to Walton and López-Acevedo (2005), in 2002, half of Mexico's population lived in poverty and one fifth in extreme poverty. Although migration may be conceived as a family strategy to conquer poverty and ensure survival, in most cases the process is initiated by one of the parents, usually the father. As mentioned earlier, this is not a new trend. It has been observed and documented for more than a decade (Durand & Massey, 1992; Durand, Massey, & Zenteno, 2001; Instituto Nacional de Estadística Geográfica e Informática (INEGI), 2004; PPIC, 1997).

This family immigration pattern and the estimates previously discussed substantiate the need to give more attention to Mexican immigrant families, whether they are documented or not, with a particular focus on the role of the father and his fathering efforts to support his family from the U.S. Understandably, for many years, investigators have focused on the role of the father as a function of child development and family well-being. However, by doing this, they have observed fatherhood from value-based social conventions and expectations. They have seldom asked: What is it like to be a father? As a response to such apparent absence of interest, one of the goals of this study is to answer the question: What is it like to be a Mexican immigrant father engaged in cross-border fathering?

Epistemological Considerations

Fathering from a foreign country is a demanding task, which is outside the range of normal experience for most people. It is an intricate reality with degrees of complexity and depth that vary according to the situation of each individual. Although useful, history, statistics, and patterns of migration attempt to depict only one or a few aspects of such an experience. When taking into consideration the transnational dimension of migration and the personal and intimate nature of fathering in such a fluid context, it is possible to imagine that many socio-environmental and individual variables interact with each other. Further, these variables impinge upon and transform the individual who in turn transforms the social context, and vice-versa.

Research designs are shaped by issues pertaining to the nature of reality and the nature of knowledge. These philosophical concerns need to be addressed clearly since they inform the way in which research is going to be implemented, or as Firestone (1990) puts it in his discussion of paradigms and practice: “paradigmatic assumptions determine research strategy” (p. 106). According to Guba (1990) a paradigm is the basic set of beliefs that guide action and which can be understood based on how scientists

respond to three basic questions categorized as the ontological, epistemological, and methodological questions.

Ontology is concerned with the nature of what is understood as 'reality.' It refers to questioning the existence of a 'real' world that is independent of our knowledge; it is a theory of being (Marsh & Stoker, 2002). We use the terms of ontology to answer the question 'What kinds of things are there in the world?' The main ontological approaches are realist and relativist. The realist contends that reality is 'out there,' distant from the observer and governed by immutable natural laws. For the relativist, realities manifest in the shape of multiple mental constructions, based on the social context and experience.

Epistemology is concerned with the nature of the relationship between the inquirer and that which is to be known. The main epistemological positions are dualist/objectivist, modified objectivist, and subjectivist. Bryman (2001) holds that "objectivism is an ontological position that implies that social phenomena confront us as external facts that are beyond our reach of influence" (p. 16). Simply put, all social phenomena exist beyond the control of the social actors and their actions. Subjectivism sustains that "inquirer and inquired are fused into a single (monistic) entity. Findings are literally "the creation of the process of interaction between the two" (Guba, 1990, p. 27).

Methodology is the way by which we gain knowledge about the world. It is concerned with the interaction among the various parts of the study as it relates to the production of the findings. Further, it pertains to the moral order (the rules, values, and priorities given to social situations and individual action) presupposed in the practices of science (Popkewitz, 1990). Methodologies can belong to two main categories, namely: experimental/manipulative and hermeneutic/dialectic. Often in experimental methodologies, hypotheses are formulated in advance and subjected to empirical tests. In hermeneutic/dialectic methods, individual constructions are "elicited and refined

hermeneutically, and compared and contrasted dialectically” (Guba, 1990, p. 27), in order to generate one or a few constructions on which there is significant consensus.

As stated earlier, this study is concerned with exploring the lived experience of Mexican immigrant fathers as they engage in cross-border fathering. Studying individuals’ lived experiences involves inviting the person to reflect on past experience or, as van Manen (1990) puts it: to be “reflectively as past presence” (p. 36). From this vantage point, a constructivist paradigm to guide this study is called for. The investigator ponders on the nature of his relationship with the participants, giving special consideration to the way in which the interactions are shaped and, therefore, impact the results of the study. Because it was assumed that many descriptions revealing different experiences (realities) and meanings were going to be gathered from the participants, a position of relativism was considered. Encouraging participants to reveal their realities requires investigator-participant interactions; therefore, the investigator takes a subjectivist stance in order to begin thinking about how to access them. Because the goal of this study is to abstract and depict detailed descriptions of the experience, a hermeneutic/dialectic methodology is considered. Hermeneutic science involves “reading a text so that the intention and meaning behind appearances are fully understood” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 9).

Constructivism may be well understood as a metatheory challenging the scientific tradition of positivism (Gergen, 1985). Constructivism also challenges the positivist assumption that it is possible to differentiate facts from values. For constructivists, values and attitudes determine what are taken to be facts. Therefore, whereas positivism asks what the facts are, constructivism explores what the assumptions are; whereas positivism asks what the answers are, constructivism explores what the questions are (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988). Constructivism, as well as postmodernism, holds that

scientific knowledge cannot be politically neutral, which is an appropriate premise from which to explore the experience of Mexican immigrant fathers in the U.S.

According to Spivey (1997), the most salient characteristic of constructivism is “an emphasis on the generative, organizational, and selective nature of human perception, understanding, and memory – the theoretical ‘building’ metaphor guiding thought and inquiries” (p. 3). Although constructivism was not conceptualized as a theory until the 1920s or 1930s, these views have been nurtured through several centuries. In an effort to help scholars understand the origins of constructivism, Spivey (1997) cites three prominent views that have influenced later philosophical developments: Kantian, Vichian, and Hegelian thought. Kant (1946/1781) insists that humans impose order on their sensory experience of the outside world, as opposed to discerning order from the world, and that they create knowledge, as opposed to discovering it. For Vico (1968/1725), language is particularly essential. In his view, myth and metaphor are the means through which individuals make sense of experience. He adopted a collectivist view of knowledge, believing that people belonging to a particular society or community share a psychological unity, ‘a common sense’ that regulates social life. Vico puts emphasis on societies as he pays special attention to their different ways of knowing and their relevant socially constructed products, such as organizations and institutions. Hegel (1931/1927) argues that individuals are determined by the communities where they belong. He points out to a unity of spirit among those who belong to a particular state and to differences between states as they develop historically. It is important to bring attention to the relevance of these views, which emphasize individuals’ roles as co-protagonists of the experiences of fatherhood and migration, compelled collectively by the need to improve their lives or ensure the survival of their families. Consistent with García’s (1985) claim, Hegel’s view speaks to the culture created around the experience of migration in Mexico, particularly in regard to *la frontera*.

Through the constructivist lens, individuals are constructive agents; therefore, meaning and knowledge are developed, instead of passively received. Constructivism holds that individuals receive and process information but also creatively generate knowledge with one another (Nurius & Berlin, 1995). Constructivism takes several forms. Of particular interest in this study is social constructivism or constructionism. In an effort to define social constructionism, Hruby (2001) emphasizes the differences between constructionism and constructivism and defines the former as a sociological description of knowledge and the latter as a psychological description. Hruby notes that although some scholars tend to refer to social constructionism and social constructivism interchangeably, such forms of *macro-constructivism* still refer to the influence of social processes on the individual's psychological (or phenomenological) construction of meaning. Constructionism, notes Hruby, may be understood as "the way knowledge is constructed by, for, and between members of a discursively mediated community" (p. 2). Constructionism provides a solid philosophical ground for this study. The lived experience of cross-border fathering manifests in a changing socioeconomic, political, and global environment where feelings and ideas intertwine in the creation of reality.

Theoretical Grounding

As discussed above, this study relies on personal accounts and descriptions of the phenomenon as remembered and articulated by Mexican immigrant fathers. In order for this to happen, an emic perspective is necessary. Such stance looks for and honors the insider's or native's perception of reality. Further, Fetterman (1998) notes that an emic perspective fosters the recognition and acceptance of multiple realities, which can assist in the understanding of why individuals feel, think, and act in the different ways they do. The following theoretical frameworks provide a solid ground from where to begin to understand the phenomenon of cross-border fathering. Other frameworks are relevant as well; however, the investigator focuses on the following because they relate

to the phenomenon by: (1) offering some initial explanations, and (2) by raising more questions. In a truly constructivist view, it is understood that not one but a few theories can shed light on this phenomenon.

Immigration Theoretical Perspectives

Current immigration theory offers several possible explanations and predictions about mass movements of people. However, this growing body of research often groups labor migration and individual migration together. Portes and Borocz (1989) note that the most widely recognized approach to the origins of international migration, “push-pull” theory, which explains labor flows as a consequence of poverty in the sending societies, is ineffective for understanding migrant settlement patterns. Among “push factors,” they identify the following variables: economic, social, and political hardships. Comparative advantages in the more advanced nation-states are identified as “pull factors.” Classic immigration theory argues that the relationship between these factors determines the size and the direction of immigrant flows. However, Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) would disagree with Portes’ and Borocz’s assertion that “push-pull” dynamics are no longer factual. On the contrary, she argues that what pushes Mexican men to migrate is, basically, the need to seek better opportunities elsewhere.

Other views indicate that more so than economic laws of supply and demand, the presence of transnational social networks stands out as a compelling theory. A study by Massey (1987) identifies prior migrant experience by the individual and his or her kin as a major predictor of migration. In fact, families pass on their knowledge about the different aspects and the possible rewards of migration to their younger generations and relatives; a dynamic that helps explain a tendency among Mexican immigrants to flow to certain places and not to others in the U.S. where they form communities or insert themselves in already established social networks. Browning and Rodriguez (1985) note that newly arrived immigrants from Mexico often find employment within a few days

thanks to the support from family and kin. Similarly, González (1999) maintains that 'transnational migrant circuits,' whereby Mexican families maintain dual residence, traveling back-and-forth between Mexico and the U.S. constitute a consistent and reliable support system among Mexican immigrants.

Economic Theory

As it has been discussed, the majority of Mexican immigrants settle in the U.S. either permanently or temporarily with the purpose of seeking employment to support their families. In light of such phenomenon, current economic patterns are worth-discussing. The income gap between rich and poor nations continues to grow dramatically; a trend that has intensified since the end of World War II. Seligson (2003) illustrates this trend with some staggering statistics: in 1950, the average per capita income of low-income countries was \$164, while in the industrialized countries was \$3,841, resulting in an absolute income gap of \$3,677. The trend continued through the last half of the twentieth century. By 2001, the gap was wider than ever: the low-income countries averaged only \$430 in gross national income, while the high-income countries averaged \$26,710, yielding a gap of \$26,280. Ironically, this trend does not reveal that the poor countries got poorer. In fact, in a thirty-year period their citizens experienced an increase in income by an average of only \$2.70 a year, "about what a North American might spend for lunch at a neighborhood fast-food stand" (Seligson, 2003, p. 1). This comparison shows that growth has taken place in poor countries, but it has been extremely slow and never drawing near to the growth experienced among the rich nations.

Analyses of trends in global income inequality are usually presented by two opposing fronts. On one side, the globalists see the last two decades of market-driven integration of economies as the cause of declining global inequality (and poverty) and improving levels of human welfare. On the other side, anti-globalists regard the

extension of international markets and corporate and financial interests as having the opposite effect: declining levels of human welfare worldwide and so, globalization is known not as the phenomenon supporting a global village but as promoting and engaging in a *global pillage* (see Brecher & Costello, 1994), further depleting and debilitating the struggling economies of the developing countries and their citizens who begin to regard migration as a viable solution to their challenged sustenance.

Passel and Suro (2005) contend that immigration patterns coincide closely with similar patterns in the performance of the U.S. economy, particularly in regard to demand and supply of labor. The annual flow of immigrants from Mexico between 1992 and 2004 appears to be more closely related to trends in the U.S. economy than in the Mexican economy; as the U.S. economy adds more jobs to its workforce, Mexican migration increases. This view coincides with “push-pull” immigration theory.

Gender

In the last two decades, an increasing number of scholars have devoted a great deal of time and thought to articulate what they refer to as a ‘New Psychology of Men’ which ranges from theoretical to applied perspectives (Levant, 1992; Levant, 1996; Levant & Kopecky, 1995; Levant & Pollack, 1995; Meth & Pasick, 1990). In an attempt to understand men and the challenges which lead them to seek counseling, these views combine elements of two different vantage points. The first one is a developmental perspective and addresses the tasks and dynamics of individual male identity development throughout the lifespan (Betcher & Pollack, 1993; Rabinowitz & Cochran, 1994). The second one is a gender role perspective and focuses on those aspects of male identity that are socially constructed and which impact on men’s self-regard as well as how men are perceived by society at large (O’Neil, 1981; Pleck, 1981, 1995).

Most discussions about gender differences typically begin with sex, for men and women are, in fact, biologically different. However, such rhetoric must not be limited to

arguments about biology. Sex refers to the biological structure, including our chromosomal, chemical and anatomical organization. Gender refers to the meanings that are often attached to those differences within a culture. Some argue that differential socialization explains how we acquire traits, behaviors, and attitudes that our culture defines as either masculine or feminine, appropriate and inappropriate, etc. In other words, we are not different but we become different through the process of socialization. Although Kimmel (2000) argues that neither biological determinism nor differential socialization can be useful to explain gender differences, it is undeniable that the latter accounts for males' and females' construction of perceived roles and responsibilities in society, as exemplified by gender-based expectations ascribed to parenthood, and – in this study particularly – fatherhood.

Life-Course Perspective

Life-course studies dawned in the 1960s as a result of a new emphasis on time, process and context, and owe much to pioneering longitudinal studies. The focus of this perspective is not on the description of intrinsic age-related development. Instead, it suggests that experience may be understood by considering the series of transitions that actually guide individual movement across time (Hohn & Mackensen, 1989). This framework introduces biopsychosocial development as consisting of non-uniform, indeterminate pathways of development from birth to old age across several different environments, cultures, and historical times. This view is unlike traditional life cycle models, which describe life stages as universal, sequential, and somewhat predictable. Stage models may ignore the fact that stages and specific tasks are culture-bound in the sense that they originate in the social norms of a particular society at a particular time in history (Germain & Gitterman, 1999) or may overlook the inevitable interplay of maturation, individual potential, degrees of environmental obstacles and opportunities, and cultural differences (Chess, Fernández, & Korn, 1980).

Cycle and stage models are not likely to include differences related to diverse family structures, multicultural aspects, gender roles, and issues of power, oppression and poverty. Life-course analysis, however, is concerned with “the explication of historical effects, the process of status transmission and behavioral change across the life span” (Elder, 1992, p. 633). From a U.S. centric and mainstream view of family life and father involvement, the journey of the Mexican immigrant father may be perceived as atypical and perhaps harmful to his children as a result of family disruption. It could also be understood as father absence. However, given the non-ordinary nature of cross-border fathering, the life-course framework is useful and appropriate.

Humanistic and Existential Perspectives

Maslow (1943, 1968, 1979) maintained that people were basically good. He was more interested in explaining successful personality development than pathology. From his study of successful individuals, he postulated a hierarchy of needs that individuals must meet in order to reach their ultimate potential: self-actualization. He contended that in order to successfully negotiate the level of needs (physiological, safety, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization), a person must have an emotional supportive environment. Humanistic theory focuses on wholeness and is congruent also with the assumptions contained in the ecological and strengths perspectives.

The central contribution of humanism is represented by its attention to human potential, growth, and its proactive view of human behavior. Humanistic views are germane to Mexican immigrant fathers’ investment in providing for their families. Safety and survival (not only for the father but also for the entire family) are two fundamental motivating needs. Humanism helps explain adaptation difficulties as more subjective needs such as safety, belonging, esteem and self-actualization may prove difficult to satisfy in a new and unknown social environment.

Strengths Perspective

In direct opposition to mainstream culture's 'obsession and fascination' with deficits, problems, and pathologies, Saleebey (2005) contends that the strengths perspective is a lens through which it is possible to engage in the identification and appreciation of the resources and resourcefulness that all individuals, families, and communities have. This framework is not about ignoring or minimizing the effects of adverse situations. On the contrary, in the face of such situations, the need to assess capacities and competencies is fundamental to restore balance and promote healing and growth. This framework assumes that although traumatic experiences may be damaging, they may also be a source of challenge, motivation, and creativity. Furthermore, it postulates that the capacity to grow and change among individuals, groups, and communities has no limit.

The notion that problems may be approached as opportunities is testimony to the resilient nature and creativity of the individual. A particular problem may be seen as a challenge, a turning point, and a door to personal growth. Many times, behaviors develop as resistance to oppression, consequently promoting survival. Compelled by a determination to survive, individuals may use an array of "mental and behavioral strategies to prevent, withstand, stop, or oppose their subjugation and its consequences" (Cowger, Anderson, & Snively, 2005, p. 101). The experiences of departure, temporary loss of familial and social support, and settlement in a foreign country are clear examples of the courage, protective nature, and sense of sacrifice among Mexican immigrant fathers.

Resilience Theory

In recent years, both the conceptual and research literature have increasingly focused on resilience. Today, definitions of this construct abound. Warschaw and Barlow (1995) define it as the ability of certain materials to return to its original form after being

bent, stretched, twisted, etc. They claim that resilient people appear to have the same ability, particularly when they change or adapt in ways that make them stronger following certain strenuous events. Greene and Conrad (2002) note that, despite the increasing popularity of the construct of resilience, “there is no full-blown theory of resilience” (p. 29) while the term appears to be used interchangeably with other concepts such as *hardiness, persistence, and healthy coping*.

Resilience studies developed from observations of children who appeared to be functioning competently in spite of having been exposed to unfavorable situations when psychopathology was expected (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998), although unexpected positive relationships between risk and exposure had also been observed among adults. Eventually, attention was turned to those factors that influence or moderate such relationship. Risk and those protective mechanisms assumed to prevent psychopathology are instrumental concepts for the understanding of this framework.

Fraser, Richman, and Galinsky, (1999) espouse Masten et al.'s (1999) definition of resilience which refers to a host of phenomena resulting in successful adaptation in the face of major threats to human development. They emphasize that resilience must be viewed ecologically because both, risk and protective factors vary across environments and cultures. Resilience lends several appropriate concepts for the study of this cohort, especially when taking into account that adverse situations are experienced when the father faces several hardships in Mexico as well as along the journey of migration.

Stress and Coping Theory

Given the taxing nature of the experiences of migration, separation, and resettlement, stress theory must be considered. Lazarus (1966) suggests that stress must be understood as an organizing concept for observing a broad array of phenomena relevant to human adaptation. As such, stress is not a variable but a *rubric* comprised of

several other variables and processes. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) note that stress phenomena have traditionally been approached from three major definitional orientations: (1) *stimulus* definitions assume that certain physiological and environmental stimuli are exceedingly demanding but do not account for individual variations in the appraisal of such stimuli; (2) *response* definitions explain stress as a reaction to physiological and environmental stimuli causing the individual to be in a 'state of stress;' and (3) *relational* definitions underscore the person-environment dyad in which both, individual characteristics and the nature of the stimulus are considered.

Accordingly, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define psychological stress as "a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being" (p. 19), and explain coping as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (p. 141). Coping is to be understood as a process-oriented behavior, that is, the individual thinks and acts in a particular situation based on the resources he can draw at a specific moment in order to deal with certain demands. Within this framework, family stress theory is worth mentioning as well.

Family Stress

Family stress theory underscores the complex yet meaningful role that certain family types play in buffering the impact of stressful life events and facilitating family adaptation. Several investigators have given a great deal of thought to research design and theory development that could explain why some families are better able to rise above adverse circumstance and tragedy and even thrive afterwards, while other families, dealing with somewhat similar stressors appear to give up or soon become easily depleted. The relevance of family stress theory to the study of normative life transitions and adaptation to significant life changes is partially based on the key roles

that family type, family strengths, and capabilities play in explaining family attitudes and behavior.

McCubbin and Thompson (1987) note that research on family transitions, crises, and adaptation has drawn from fundamental assumptions about family life: (1) over the life cycle, families experience hardships and changes as a natural and predictable aspect of family life; (2) in the face of family transitions, families develop basic strengths and capabilities designed to foster growth and development among family members and the family unit; (3) following a crisis or major transition, families develop unique strengths and resources in order to protect the family from unexpected stressors to foster the family's adaptation; and (4) during periods of stress, families may benefit from and contribute to their network of relationships and resources.

This theory helps explain the complexity and severity of many situations at play and often converging in the family system in times of crisis. It can help explain how the family system copes with separation and loss when the father departed and resettled in the U.S., as well as family adjustment during resettlement.

Generative Fathering Framework

Dollahite, Hawkins, and Brotherson (1998) propose a “conceptual ethic of fathering as generative work” (p. 109). This framework draws from Erikson's (1950, 1982) developmental theory and from Dollahite's and Hawkins' (1998) conceptualization of fathering as work, instead of a social role resulting from a changing socio-historical context. This concept emphasizes a non-deficit understanding of fathering based on fathers' responsibilities to meet the needs of the next generation. Erikson (1950, 1982) coined the term ‘generativity’ to refer to adults' caring for and contributing to their offspring, and saw generativity as a developmental crisis, one in which adults try to attain a favorable balance of creativity, productivity, and procreation over stagnation and self-absorption (Snarey, 1997). Generative fathering goes beyond the deficit paradigm

that characterizes the scholarly literature on fatherhood in the U.S. in the last decades. Particularly, it goes beyond the “role-inadequacy perspective” (or RIP), which puts strong emphasis on “fathers’ lack of adaptation to socio-historical change, their lack of involvement in caring for children, and the lack of interest in changing the status quo” (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997, p. 15).

The generative approach assumes that: (a) fathers are under the obligations of an ethical call from their children and communities to meet their children's needs; (b) the needs of the next generation are preeminent over the needs of adults; (c) fathers have ‘contextual agency,’ that is, fathers make choices, within a context of constraints, in relation to the next generation; and (d) fathers can and should connect with and care for their children in meaningful ways (Dollahite, Hawkins, & Brotherson, 1997). This conceptual ethic explicitly asserts that good fathering is complex, demanding, and dynamic, and that most fathers face circumstances and barriers that make generative fathering a challenging endeavor but also open to possibility.

Immigration theoretical perspectives, economic theories, gender, life-course perspective, humanism, the strengths perspective, resilience, stress and coping theory, family stress, and generative fathering are referred to and discussed as they help guide this study. However, it is important to point out that they are only marginally helpful considering that the experiences of immigration and fathering continue to change so rapidly. The aforementioned frameworks help to begin exploring the phenomenon of cross-border fathering while offering the opportunity to observe it from several angles. It is evident that global and Mexican socioeconomic forces increase the likelihood that a Mexican father might entertain the idea of migrating to and settling in the U.S., and then proceed to bring his family with him. Yet, both the decision to migrate and other relevant events that take place afterwards depend on many other environmental and personal variables. In sum, not one single factor can account for the phenomenon under study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Munhall (2000) points out that in qualitative designs the literature review is often postponed in order to maintain an open and unbiased vision, “so that the knowledge of the experience is, to the extent possible, without presupposition” (p. 17). However, there is ample consensus among scholars who agree that it is necessary to know what has come before the current project, what constructs have already been investigated, what methodologies have proven effective, and to what extent the research in this field has been evaluated (Heppner & Heppner, 2004). That stated, a review of the theoretical and empirical literature follows and provides the background that informed the undertaking of this study. Due to the limited research on this population group, the following review encompasses several salient foci that illustrate the areas that comprise the complex phenomenon under study: fathering, migration, acculturation and adaptation, the Mexican sociopolitical context, immigrant fathers, and what it is known or assumed – so far – about the Mexican father.

Views of Fatherhood in the U.S.

Father, fatherhood, and fathering are concepts that elicit a broad array of sentiments. Knowledge about fatherhood has developed considerably in the U.S. in the last thirty years but most research foci are still guided by rigid views about what it means to be a father; more precisely, what has become a strong area of contention among scholars and policy-makers: what is father involvement? While federal agendas and a growing body of knowledge spearheaded by authors such as Blakenhorn (1995); Daniels (1998); Phares (1999); and Popenoe (1996) focus on *deadbeat dads*, *disengaged fathers*, *responsible fatherhood* and *absent fathers*, only a few works have venture into exploring the experience of fatherhood from a holistic lens. Some examples are: *Do Men Mother? Fathering, Care, and Domestic responsibility* (Doucet, 2006);

Generative Fathering: Beyond Deficit Perspectives (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997); *Men at Work: An Action Guide to Masculine Healing* (Frey & Graham, 1997); *My Daddy Takes Care of Me! Fathers as Care Providers* (Casper, 1997); and the meaningful contribution by several scholars in *Handbook of Father Involvement: Multidisciplinary Perspectives* edited by Tamis-LeMonda and Cabrera (2002), who ponder on the nature, antecedents, and outcomes of father involvement from several angles including biology, family structure, culture, and child development.

It is safe to argue that in most cultures women accept and perform their responsibilities in child rearing, in part because they gave birth to the child and because of social conventions that expect that they would do so. On the other hand, men may or may not learn to become nurturers and care givers due to a host of factors ranging from the personal to the socioeconomic realms. Consistent with Kimmel's (2000) discussion on gender-based expectations ascribed to parenthood, throughout the world societies prescribe the roles and responsibilities of fathers closely tied to what those societies expect of men. As a result, misinformed and value-laden inferences are often made about fathers' motivation and commitment. Nevertheless, the degree of involvement that a father has with his children is affected by socio-economic, ethnic/racial, and residential contexts (Bronte-Tinkew, Moore, & Cabrera, 1998). There is a myriad of micro, meso, macro, and obviously global level factors influencing father involvement today. These factors may be specific to the father, related to the child, related to the mother-father relationship, related to societal attitudes, employment opportunities, the work environment, or related to support from friends and the extended family, just to name a few.

Little research on fatherhood was done before the 1970s (Milner, 2003). More than three decades ago, Henderson (1980) noted that although research had devoted a great deal of attention to the effects of fathering on children, little or virtually no attention

had been given to the effects of fathering on fathers. In 1982, Cath, Gurwitt, and Ross observed that the psychological literature contained only a few studies on fathers and fathering and that, although the focus on fatherhood was beginning to intensify, the father still was 'the forgotten parent.' In 1991, Tripp-Reimer and Wilson noted that research on fathering behaviors had not been a major focus of social scientists and argued that the majority of accounts of fathering were flawed by theoretical and methodological problems. In fact, in early studies, reliance was placed on the wife as informant; therefore, reports on fathering behaviors were drawn from the perspective of the mother. As of now, most of what is known about father involvement in the U.S. is drawn from research on middle-class men, families of European descent, and families receiving social programs (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hoffert, & Lamb, 2000; Greene, Hearn, & Emig, 1996; Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 1999).

Similar to the concept of generative fathering (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997), recent research has recommended the need to pay attention to what fathers do rather than what their absence is causing to the child. Despite the fact that research shows that fathers do not play a key role in child care, it indicates that they are significant in families and in networks of care (Hansen, 2001; Laureau, 2000). The decisions that fathers make for the entire family must be understood within the context where they live. What in one society might be scornfully labeled as father absence might be regarded as father involvement in others even if, paradoxically, the father is physically absent.

Among many families in Mexico, especially those who face socio-economic hardship, the experience of fathering takes on a dimension quite different from that in the U.S. Fathering is tied to labor migration to the U.S., which has inevitably changed traditional family dynamics in many communities around Mexico. One of these changes represents the appearance of a semi-present father who is able to participate in his children's development only for short periods of time (DeKeijzer, 1998). In fact, many

children and adolescents in rural and urban areas of some Mexican states grow up without the everyday physical presence of their biological fathers (Guzmán-Aguilera, Salgado de Snyder, Romero, & Medina-Mora, 2004).

Migration: An Overview

Given the unstable socioeconomic situation in Mexico and the geographical proximity to the U.S., many Mexican immigrant fathers arrive seeking better socioeconomic opportunities for themselves and their families. Many leave behind extreme poverty or unstable labor conditions. Because they enter the country without the necessary documentation, overstay their visas, or do not meet the criteria to apply for and receive refugee status, they do not qualify for political asylum. Yet, their experience might share commonalities with that of refugees. Not inadvertently, these immigrants might also be perceived as *economic refugees* (García, 1985).

In the U.S., the dialogue on immigration traditionally elicits images and sentiments perpetuated by literature and film in seemingly romantic and epic fashion. Such stories automatically conjure up images of thousands of Europeans, arriving in large ships to the booming industrial machinery that welcome needed workers and their families at the dawn of the twentieth century. Current immigration patterns are strikingly different. Today, immigrants arrive to fewer employment opportunities for unskilled workers and find themselves working in construction, service and fast food industries, and often without health care and retirement benefits (Passel, 2005).

Mexican immigration.

The 19th century saw the U.S. rapidly becoming a multiethnic society that included Native Americans, African Americans, European and Asian immigrants. Mexicans were not an exception. Mexican ranchers and shepherders, descendants of the Spaniards who originally had claimed the land, inhabited a vast area from Texas to New Mexico and from Arizona to Northern California. In New Mexico, Mexicans had

mixed with Native Americans comprising a mestizo population of farmers and ranchers (Norton, Katzman, Escott, Chudacoff, Paterson, & Tuttle 1998). Along the Southwestern border, Mexican immigrants streamed into the U.S. territory to find work; some returned to Mexico seasonally while others stayed.

During and after World War II, millions of Mexicans came as farm workers but many of them were seized by the U.S. Border Patrol. In 1953, the number of undocumented Mexicans was estimated in more than 865,000, a situation that caught the attention of the U.S. government. As a result, in 1954 the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) devised *Operation Wetback*, a procedure which involved police raids of Mexican barrios throughout the Southeastern states. Because it focused on *illegal aliens*, a common practice of Operation Wetback targeted Mexicans in general (Espinosa, 1999). This enforcement relied on a broadly stereotypical approach for interrogating *suspected aliens*: they adopted the practice of stopping *Mexican-looking* individuals on the streets and asking them for identification. In some cases, undocumented Mexican immigrants were deported along with their U.S.-born children, who were considered citizens by law. Eventually, Operation Wetback was dismantled as a result of the successful efforts of human rights groups.

Mexicans continued to enter the country in large numbers, many of them undocumented. Beginning in the mid-1960s, large numbers of poverty-stricken Mexicans began to cross the 2,000-mile U.S.-Mexico border. By the 1970s, it was common knowledge that Latinos had become the fastest-growing minority in the U.S. as a result of increasing flows of immigration and high birth rate. Norton et al. (1998) note that of the more than 20 million Latinos living in the U.S. in the 1970s, eight million were of Mexican origin and concentrated in California, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado. The influx of immigration continued in the 1970s and 1980s. By 1990, one out of three residents in Los Angeles and Miami was Latino. In 2002, there were 37.4 million Latinos

in the U.S. of which approximately 70% or 26 million identified themselves as Mexican or Mexican-American, with more than 6 million estimated to be undocumented (Passel, 2005). Lack of legal immigration status poses new threats for Mexicans, some of which did not exist before 2001.

One would like to believe that Operation Wetback is a matter of the past. However, it is not so. Anti-Mexican sentiments have grown so strong in the U.S. in the last few years that many advocacy groups are calling for an Operation Wetback II. Especially after September 11, 2001, several U.S. organizations are demanding effective measures to deal with immigration by suggesting a new Operation Wetback or by glorifying it through articles and other documents. Among these organizations are the Christian Science Monitor, the Federal Observer, VDARE.com, and the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR). What seemed to be a period of calm for Mexican and other immigrants came to an end at the turn of the 21st century.

Threats to Mexican immigration.

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, brought about the need to question and reexamine the traditional assumption that immigrants came to the U.S. with good intentions. Policy-makers soon supported the notion that some immigrants wished to harm the U.S. and used the terrorist attacks as a genuine reason to change the focus of immigration policy from economic concerns to national security considerations. In fact, shortly after the attacks, President Bush created the Office of Homeland Security in the White House and appointed Pennsylvania governor Tom Ridge as director, who considered the creation of a border security agency by merging components of the Customs Service, Coast Guard, and Border Patrol (Chih Lin, 2002). This new focus on security along the borders encouraged Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) to bolster their operations and reexamine border strategies. On October 24, 2001, Congress passed the U.S.A. Patriot Act, which authorized funding for triple border

staffing levels, among other immigration-related provisions (Mintz, 2003). Further changes in immigration policy took place, posing more challenges for Mexican immigrant families.

INS was a part of the U.S. Department of Justice. Its function was to oversee the legal entry of non-U.S. citizens who were temporarily or permanently settling in the U.S. and enforce the laws of naturalization, the process by which a foreign-born person becomes a citizen. It also monitored illegal entrance into the country; prevented the receipt of social welfare benefits by those who were ineligible; investigated, detained, and deported those who were found to be illegally residing in the U.S.; and handled legal and illegal immigration and naturalization. It ceased to exist on March 1, 2003 (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2007).

Most of the functions handled by the former INS were transferred to three new agencies within the Department of Homeland Security. The administration of immigration services, including permanent residence, naturalization, asylum, and other functions became the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS), which existed briefly before becoming the *U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services* (USCIS). The investigative and enforcement functions, which include inquiries, deportation, and intelligence, were combined with U.S. Customs personnel, the Federal Protective Service, and the Federal Air Marshal Service and became the *U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)*. The border functions of the INS, which comprised the Border Patrol with INS inspectors, were combined with U.S. Customs Inspectors to create the *U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)*. In 2003, the Department of Homeland Security unveiled the five color-coded threat scale known as the *Advisory System* (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2007). This historical development is worth-mentioning because as the Patriot Act removed certain civil liberties from American citizens because of the government's concerns with the threat of

terrorism, it also made the immigrant population in the U.S. much more vulnerable than it had been for the last few decades, especially Mexicans by virtue of their increase in numbers.

Deportation is not a new occurrence; however, the frequency and intensity with which it happens in 2008 represents a new phenomenon. Examples of this sudden change are evidenced in the increased number of reports and personal accounts attesting to the existence of raids and deportations. As a result of the Patriot Act, many more crimes deem immigrants, including lawful permanent residents, subject to mandatory detention and mandatory deportation. The effect of these changes has been dramatic. According to Lonegan (2006) in 1995, approximately 5,500 people were detained on any given day by immigration authorities and some 33,000 were deported. In 2003, over 20,000 people were detained on any given day and over 77,000 were deported. Another significant change in immigration policy is that immigration agents no longer need to obtain warrants to detain suspects. In addition, they have broad authority to question anyone about their immigration status and to search their homes. Agents are not required to read the Miranda warning when making arrests either. Detained immigrants have the right to a lawyer, but only one they are able to afford. While criminal suspects are usually sent to jails near the courts that hear their cases, immigration agents have discretion in deciding where to hold immigrants detained for deportation (Preston, 2007).

Patterns of migration.

In contemporary times, world migration has grown in dramatic proportions as one of the consequences of globalization, a phenomenon that has increasingly caused massive movements of people worldwide (Midgley, 1997). Advantageously, globalization contributes to an enduring interdependent global environment (Sarri, 1997), making it possible for individuals from any nation to learn about and pursue opportunities existing

half way across the globe. The stable economies of the industrialized nations continue to attract waves of immigrants and refugees. The U.S. is no exception for it hosts individuals of virtually all nationalities. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2005), the U.S. hosts nearly 39 million.

Migration may be well understood as a continuum. It is a process that begins not at the moment of departure but in its planning stages in the country of origin and has been conceptualized by several experts as a process comprised of different stages: pre-migration, movement, and resettlement (Drachman, 1992; Gonsalves, 1992; IOM, 1995). Also relevant to this study are the travel patterns used by many families, which sometimes require family members to migrate separately over a period of time. Similar to other immigrant and refugee groups, Mexican families do not always migrate together but in steps. Due to financial, legal or safety reasons, fathers often decide to migrate alone without their spouses and children. Once the parents have settled in the U.S., either they return to Mexico to pick their children or hire a person – commonly known as a *coyote* – to do so on their behalf. The length of time that families wait to be reunited in the U.S. depends on several factors. This migratory pattern is often referred to as *step-wise migration* (Conway, 1980), *chain migration* (Lamm & Imhoff, 1985) or *immigration multiplier* (Jasso & Rosenzweig, 1986).

Models of migration stages and patterns help us understand the complexity of this experience and reminds us that not one model fits every father or family.

Acculturation

Acculturation is an inevitable process when two or more cultures come in contact. Berry, Poortinga, Segall, and Dasen (1992) define acculturation as the “cultural and psychological change brought about by contact with other peoples belonging to different cultures and exhibiting different behavior” (p. 19). This process involves learning new cultural patterns of relationships and communication, which to some extent

offers new challenges as well as new opportunities for the individual. An early definition of acculturation referred to *face-to-face contact* between two distinct cultural groups (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936). However, in the second half of the twentieth century, acculturation began to be understood as an individual process but not separated from group dynamics.

Acculturation and mental health.

Several studies have explored the relationship between acculturation and mental health among Mexican immigrants. Most of them identify a positive correlation between acculturation and negative mental health outcomes (Alderete, Vega, Kolody, & Aguilar-Gaxiola, 1990; Escobar, Hoyos, Nervi, & Gara, 2000; Vega, Sribney, Aguilar-Gaxiola and Kolody, 2004). Nonetheless, a major methodological concern regarding the validity of several studies is the fact that researchers who have examined the relationship between acculturation and psychological distress appear to have confounded the concept of acculturation with that of acculturative stress. They seem to assume that acculturation is inevitably a stressful process for all immigrants, and report and discuss findings on acculturative stress when, in reality, they refer to acculturation (Betancourt & López, 1993). Other worth-noting confounding issue is that several studies exploring a broad array of phenomena among Latino groups tend to refer to participants as Latino, Hispanic, Mexican or Mexican American while it is not always clear whether the sample was comprised of Mexican immigrants or U.S.-born citizens of Mexican ancestry. Furthermore, Arcia, Skinner, Bailey, and Correa (2001) emphasize that the varying patterns of association of variables by country of origin and by gender, and the measurement issues they raise, underscore the necessity to design more complex models of acculturation than those typically used in research with Latinos, and advocate for the development of culturally sensitive protocols.

The Mexican Enclave

The defining characteristic of border conflict and contradiction is exemplified by the joining of the U.S., the world's dominant economic-political nation-state, with Mexico, which despite having become a middle-income nation is regarded as a third-world economy. Alvarez (1995) points out that no other border in the world displays such inequalities of power, economics, and array of human conditions as this one does. Taking into consideration the contrasting political economies of both countries and their history of conquest and domination, the Mexican-U.S. border is a good example of how nation-states negotiate, marginalize, and influence people's behavior. As a result, *Indians, fronterizos, norteros, Chicanos, Chicanas, Mexican Americans, Mexicanos, Anglos, Tejanos, gringos and agringados, Texans, green carders, pachucos, cholos, commuters*, and many others represent distinct historical backgrounds and cultural behaviors related to *la frontera*. Nonetheless, the so-called *border people* are constantly shifting and renegotiating identities amidst maneuvers of power and submission, while often adopting multiple identities to live in two different worlds almost simultaneously. Lacy (2007) notes: "The history of Mexican immigration to the United States has been like a 'revolving door' and has waxed and waned depending on conditions in Mexico."

It is useful to take a look at Mexico's socioeconomic situation in the last decades of the 20th century to better understand the significant increase in immigration from Mexico to the U.S. During the 1980s, Mexico experienced a drastic change in wage inequality: the wage gap between skilled and unskilled workers widened (Hanson & Harrison, 1999), indicating that the wages of more-educated, more-experienced workers increased significantly compared to those of less-educated, less-experienced workers. The shift in employment toward skilled-intensive industries contributed to an increase in the demand for skilled workers, whose wages rose significantly compared to those of unskilled workers.

This phenomenon helps to understand two obvious trends: (1) an increase in adult education in the late 1980s when individuals recognized the need to develop skills to remain in the work force and pursue higher education or other forms of training (Cragg & Epelbaum, 1996; Feliciano, 1993), and (2) an increase in immigration to the U.S. by unskilled workers from Mexico (Borjas, 1994). According to Durand, Kandel, Parrado, and Massey (1996), and Massey, Goldring, and Durand (1994), the socioeconomic restructuring experienced in Mexico pressured families and households to depend on international migration to the U.S. as a survival strategy. Kandel and Massey (2002) bring forth the concept of “culture of migration,” characterized by the high rate of out-migration to the U.S. among several Mexican communities.

As of May 2008, the estimated population of Mexico’s was 109,955,400 (Central Intelligence Agency, 2008). Per capita income is one-fourth that of the U.S. with an income distribution that remains highly unequal: 40% of the country’s population lives under the poverty line. Trade with the U.S. and Canada has tripled since the implementation of North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, although ironically in that year Mexico faced its worst economic crisis known as the *Mexican peso crisis* triggered by the sudden devaluation of the Mexican peso. Since then, economic recovery has been slow. The government is cognizant of the need to upgrade infrastructure, modernize the tax system and labor laws, and provide incentives to invest in the energy sector. Although slow, progress is underway. However, not all Mexican citizens regard Mexico this way.

The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (*Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, EZLN*) is an armed revolutionary group based in Chiapas, one of the poorest states of Mexico. Its social composition is comprised mostly of indigenous peoples but they have some supporters in urban areas and an international network of support. The EZLN sees Mexico as a land divided into the extremely rich and the extremely poor, with

an economic system run by large business and corrupt officials who have consistently ignored a large sector of the population, especially the indigenous people (Collier & Lowery Quaratiello, 1999). This view helps one understand – to some extent – the worldview of Mexican society today, its lack of opportunities, its growing socioeconomic inequality, and the need to seek opportunities across the border.

The increase of immigration into the U.S. by unskilled workers continues to be spearheaded by men. Males perceive migration as a normal part of the life course, evoking a rite of passage or transition to manhood, in addition to being a well recognized conduit for economic development. Migration to the U.S. is integrated in Mexican popular culture as it manifests in a variety of Mexican art forms: *telenovelas* (soap operas), *retablo* paintings (votive works), and *corridos* (folk ballads), among others. In fact, the popular musical group *Los Tigres del Norte* (The Tigers from the North) writes and performs songs that consist of *corridos* about life, love, and the struggle to survive in a world that is not fair. Frequently, the group touches on subjects such as narcotics and illegal immigration, but they have also shared stories of love and betrayal between a man and a woman. The following excerpt from one of their songs alludes to crossing borders both conventionally and not conventionally (legally and illegally). One could assume that the fox the songs refers to might be the U.S. government:

*Por Tijuana y Mexicali
por Juárez y otras fronteras
le he pasado por aire
y por debajo de tierra
será que por eso el zorro
me ha declarado la guerra* (Hernández, 2004)

Through Tijuana and Mexicali
Through Juarez and other borders
I have cross by air
And under the ground
Perhaps, that's why the fox
Has declared war on me

The Mexican Father

Not only have Mexican men been traditionally omitted from the fatherhood scholarship but to a large extent they also have been misrepresented. A dominant and biased perspective in the literature on Mexican families, fatherhood, and immigration has portrayed Mexican fathers as rigid, authoritative, and controlling macho men (González-López, 2004). Traditionally, Mexican men are seen as violent, patriarchal, and *machistas*; perceived traits that, according to Abalos (2002), can be traced to politics of sexual violence during the Mexican conquest by the Spaniards who rampantly raped American Indian women. Rape was used to undermine the whole indigenous community. Mexican men, says Abalos, dealt with humiliation and powerlessness by displacing their rage against the women whom they blamed for losing their honor. Abalos argues that this dynamic has survived in Mexican culture until today.

Providing a historical perspective of traditional gender roles in the Mexican family, González (1999) points out that in the late 17th century, the husband was the patriarch who made the most important decisions as a result of being the breadwinner of the family. His wife was in charge of the household, raised the children, and performed most of the domestic responsibilities. Patriarchy was perpetuated from generation to generation; boys received a basic education, girls were trained in domestic skills, and marriages were often arranged at a young age (girls would usually marry when they reached the age of puberty). Mirandé (1997) notes that in comparison to Anglo-Americans, the Mexican family has historically been depicted as:

...a tangle of pathology for many social scientists...it propagates the subordinations of women, impedes individual achievement, engenders passivity and dependence, stifles normal personality development, and on occasion can even give rise to incestuous feelings among siblings.
(p. 749)

However, in the last two decades, family and adolescence studies have challenged static views of fathers of Mexican origin living in both Mexico and the U.S. (Bronstein, 1984; Falicov, 1982; Mirandé, 1991).

In the 1990s, the body of research exploring the parent-child relationship within the Mexican family also increased significantly, although in the beginning it mainly focused on the role of the mother. Emerging research studies by Chicana feminist scholars provide a more holistic view of the Mexican father. Dicochea (2004) identifies positive traits of Mexican fathers which include bravery, loyalty, pride in self as a person, responsibility of leadership in the family, sacredness of the family, respect for religion and elders, liberal political orientation, and a willingness to fight if necessary. Among the negative traits, Dicochea includes absolute power and exploitation, self-centeredness, violence, and closed aloofness.

A study by Mira and Lorentzen (2002) assessing the role of Pentecostalism among Mexican immigrant families in San Francisco, CA, describes the 'paradoxical' effects of this denomination on fathers. On the one hand, men are held responsible for their macho attitudes, and unhealthy behaviors such as substance abuse, physical abuse, family neglect, spending, and infidelity. On the other hand, they are also seen as victims of problems found in the new country, such as drugs, gangs, crime, materialism, hyper individualism, and social problems that are 'transported' across borders such as the values of machismo. Fathers are encouraged to understand their behavior as the 'devil's work' and renounce to it in the name of God. They are able to reintegrate to the community and fulfill nurturing chores, such as pushing strollers, bathing, feeding, and taking care of their children.

In an attempt to clarify negative macho stereotypes about Mexican males, Gutman (1996) explores men's negotiation of their identities and roles through their experiences as fathers dealing with violence, substance use, and sexuality. Gutman

concludes that although machismo plays a significant role on both micro and macro levels of a traditionally patriarchal Mexican society, it is an ideology increasingly challenged in contemporary Mexico. Many Mexican men reject the extremes of a machista ideology while asserting macho masculine identities that they define through integrity, responsibility, and caring.

Other traditional assumptions insist that among Mexican marriages, there is a clear understanding from the beginning that the male is the boss and the female accepts all decisions he makes. However, Vega (1990) challenges these views by arguing that – in reality – family decision-making is understood as either a joint process of both parents or primarily the job of the mother. Ybarra (1982) identifies a broad variation of family structures, ranging from patriarchal (role-segregated) structures to egalitarian (or joint-role) structures, with many combinations of these two polar opposites in between.

A study by Taylor and Behnke (2005) suggests that Mexican fathers are proud protagonists of a transformation that is taking place on both sides of the border. These fathers are redefining machismo by virtue of their attitudes and fathering practices, which challenge long-held stereotypes about Latino males in general. Further, consistent with Hawkins and Dollahite (1997), Taylor and Behnke conclude that many Mexican fathers are engaging in 'generative fathering,' see the role of the mother as being equal to theirs, and hold equal aspirations for both their sons and daughters.

With the exception of some studies focusing on the effects of family separation on children as a consequence of migration (Guzmán-Aguilera et al., 2004; Sciarra, 1999; Suarez-Orozco, Todorova, & Louie, 2001), the effects of this type of family disruption on the father do not seem to have been explored. Furthermore, it should not be assumed that findings from studies designed for Mexican-Americans or any other second or third generation Latino group in the U.S. could be transferred to Mexican immigrant fathers. Noticeable throughout the aforementioned literature is the disagreement that exists

among scholars in regard to the Mexican family system. While traditional and deficit-oriented views remain, other more hopeful and strength-based arise as a testimony to the capacity for growth among Mexican fathers and husbands.

Both stereotypes and factual information about the Mexican man continue to grow on both sides of the border, contributing to more conflicting and confusing views about the Mexican family. Views are often polarized; implying that Mexican men are either good or bad husbands/fathers. However, it is important to point out that – in every society – there are those who parent effectively and those who do not, and that such task is contingent not upon willingness alone, but often opportunity.

Let us look at Hennessy Fiske's (2004) contribution to the *Christian Science Monitor*, where she shares her observation about the effects of poverty and male migration on the families in the town of San Pablito:

In this town of about 3,300, where homes lack running water and many people suffer from malnutrition, poverty has pushed many men to seek work across the border in the United States. Some have succeeded, finding jobs in North Carolina and Nebraska, and send money back to their families for refrigerators, school supplies, and new houses of gray concrete. However, many men leave and are never heard from again. (Introduction Section, ¶ 1)

Hennessy Fiske's account is a good example and a powerful reminder that research cannot be guided by either positive or negative biases, or generalizations. Not all Mexican fathers can be categorized as either good fathers or not-good fathers. Instead, from a humanistic perspective, each situation must be observed and assessed taking into account the complexity of the experiences of fathering and immigration. Both combined make the phenomenon of cross-border fathering a unique journey for each father and, therefore, for each family.

The aforementioned literature review provides significant background information from both the empirical and conceptual scholarship on fathering, migration, acculturation and adaptation, U.S. immigration policy, the Mexican sociopolitical context, and the

Mexican family, highlighting what is known and assumed about the Mexican immigrant father. It provides the appropriate frame of reference to answer the study's grand tour question: How do Mexican immigrant fathers who initially migrate alone and eventually reunite with their families in the U.S. perceive and describe their experience?

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Rationale for the Selection of a Qualitative Method

The underlying purpose of this study is to explore Mexican immigrant fathers' awareness of the phenomenon; that is, cross-border fathering. This study focuses on those fathers who migrate to and settle in the U.S. initially alone and then create the appropriate conditions to bring the rest of the family from Mexico to join them permanently. As discussed in Chapter One, this work is guided by a qualitative research design that follows a phenomenological orientation. The study relies on philosophical assumptions from constructivist perspectives. It relies on an emic perspective, which honors the participant's own perception of reality and, as Fetterman (1998) points out, welcomes the recognition and acceptance of multiple realities.

As mentioned earlier, several frameworks can contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon under study. The reasons that might help us understand a father's decision to migrate to another country to support his family cannot depend upon one or two factors but many. Even when several interacting variables help explain a single phenomenon (e.g., a child's sports skills vary with her/his physical aptitudes, available opportunities, parents' support, etc.), they do not help us understand the phenomenon in depth nor its meaning for the individual. These factors hardly portray the 'whole picture.' In fact, Fischer and Wertz (2002) contend that "efficient data production and statistical analysis, even when supportive of hypotheses, can now be seen as incomplete; we also desire an understanding of the particularly human character of social events – their rich, holistic, participative quality" (p. 276).

In qualitative studies, the activity of participation goes beyond asking questions. Participation involves adopting a perspective of unknowing, which is essential to understanding ourselves and each participant as two distinct entities. Both investigator

and participant arrive to the interview with unique perspectives of their contexts and unique perspectives of who they are as individuals in the world. Each one of them brings to the interview his own perspectivity, worldview, and reality, all which are shared in a context of mutual respect and curiosity. When researcher and participant meet face-to-face, two perspectives of a situation ought to be acknowledged. In this way, the process of intersubjectivity begins to create a perceptual space (Munhall, 2007). As individuals participate in the activities of contemporary life, they acknowledge that they are shaped by one another and the changing social context. Similarly, scientists are also shaped by what they uncover and learn. Therefore, objectivity in research is honored when scientists recognize their contribution to the findings and invite others to share perspectives and see for themselves the phenomena that manifest.

From this vantage point, an ideographic lens is called for, where many pieces together provide a colorful and complex experience comprised of several possible realities. Again, the grand tour question guiding this project is: How do Mexican immigrant fathers who initially migrate alone and eventually reunite with their families in the U.S. perceive and describe their experiences? Consistent with Alasuutari's (1995) views on researching cultures, this question explores a significant aspect of these fathers' lives, spanning from a few months to several years in some cases. A qualitative method is necessary for this inquiry that explores several individuals' realities, complex, and ever-changing by virtue of the many experiences they encounter. To this end, time in the field and in-depth conversations with participants are required, both contributing also to the role of the investigator as an active learner (Glesne, 1999).

Why a Phenomenological Study?

Usually, phenomenology is understood in either two general ways: as a discipline in philosophy, or as a movement in the history of philosophy. The discipline of phenomenology may be defined initially as the study of structures of experience, or

consciousness. It is concerned with the study of phenomena and the ways in which individuals experience them and the meaning they give to them (Cerbone, 2006). Phenomenology involves the study of consciousness as experienced from the subjective or first person point of view.

The historical philosophical advent of phenomenology was discussed in Chapter One. In this chapter, phenomenology is discussed as a method of research (Dahl & Boss, 2005; Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1983; van Manen, 1990). The salient human experience under investigation in this study, namely cross-border fathering, is personal, intimate, and undoubtedly meaningful in unique ways to each father. The relevance of this experience as lived by the Mexican immigrant father and the meanings drawn from it are the foci of this study. A phenomenological study describes the meaning of the experience of a phenomenon for some individuals (Creswell, 1998) and seeks to understand their experiences by “entering into their field of perception in order to see life as they see it” (Bruyn, 1966) not unlike gestalt theory and its view on ‘the field’ in which individuals make contact (Spagnulolo Lobb & Lichtenberg, 2005).

Within this framework, this study sought and interviewed individuals who have experienced the phenomenon, that is, those Mexican immigrant fathers who have engaged in cross-border fathering. A description of the method follows.

Safeguard of Participants

Considering that this study sought to interview an at-risk population group, the need to safeguard the participants’ safety was paramount to this methodology. Munhall (2000) emphasizes the need to “address the handling of entry, departure, secrets, interviews, observations, and information from the perspective of protecting individual rights” (p. 22). In studies with human participants, research must be guided by ethical principles. It is then fundamental to uphold the necessary ethical standards, articulate clear agreements with the participants, and honor confidentiality and informed consent.

Developing procedures to ensure participants' full disclosure of their experiences by informing them of the nature, purpose, and requirements of the study was of most significance (Moustakas, 1994). Depending on the investigator-participant dyad and the memories to be elicited by the interview, the investigator was aware of the possibility that this study could have affected the participants in several ways, for instance, by causing feelings of grief, deep sadness, and fear.

Consistent with the principles governing the conduct of research involving human subjects in the behavioral and social sciences, the investigator sought the university's approval to carry out this project. Full review by the IUPUI/Clarian Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained in January 2006.

Setting and Access

Gaining access to sites required time, patience, and respect for the "rhythms and norms of the group" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 84). Participants in this study were not sought in any specific social environment but in the several organizations and institutions in which they participate and fulfill various roles and responsibilities. None of the participants was contacted by the investigator. Instead, he relied on building connections with those with whom participants already had developed a solid rapport and trust. The investigator gained access by contacting gatekeepers directly or, as Glesne (1999) and Fetterman (1998) suggest, through *intermediaries*.

Among the agencies contacted, there were elementary, middle, and high schools, both from Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) as well as township schools in Marion County. School principals and teachers were contacted via emails that included the recruitment flyer both in Spanish and English. Other organizations included Marion County neighborhood centers, and public health and mental health centers whose staff were contacted by phone and via email as well. In addition, recruitment flyers in both languages were sent to 62 churches, 31 grocery stores, and 18 Mexican restaurants.

Business names were randomly selected from the telephone book. Three letters sent to churches and five letters sent to grocery stores were returned, presumably as a result of no longer being in service. Thirty-nine Indiana State local health departments were contacted via email as they appear in the Indiana State Department of Health website. These emails also contained a copy of the recruitment flyer in both languages. The investigator contacted the Mexican Consulate in Indianapolis and was invited by staff to participate in a panel discussion at a local radio show in which he was encouraged to discuss his project.

Lay summaries in English (see Appendix A) and Spanish (see Appendix B) were provided to gatekeepers and interested participants alike. As suggested by Glesne (1999) the lay summary included a short biography of the investigator, a description and purpose of the study, and other relevant overarching issues emphasizing confidentiality and anonymity, and describing the handling of interview transcripts. In addition, the lay summary stated that participants would receive a \$25.00 grocery store gift card from the investigator, should they choose to participate.

Sampling Procedures

In phenomenological studies, access concerns are limited to finding individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. Creswell (1998) suggests that due to the in-depth nature of extensive and multiple interviews with participants, it is convenient to select individuals who are easily accessible. Fetterman (1998) notes, “the decision is not who shall we admit but rather who must we reject – given all the people who qualify” (p. 32). Munhall (2000) argues that the sample size may not be as relevant in qualitative studies as it is in quantitative studies but Creswell (1998) notes that a phenomenological study involves collecting information from as many as 10 individuals.

The study relied on a homogeneous sample, that is, participants shared several similar traits (Mexican, immigrant, father, primary U.S. residency, and family members in

the U.S.). The sample was also purposive in the sense that all participants have experienced the phenomenon and have already reunited with their families in the U.S. The age of the participants was not a selecting criterion; however, their readiness and ability to recall and articulate experiences were. Because participants were asked to read the lay summary and read and sign the informed consent, only those individuals who stated and demonstrated that they could read and write in Spanish were selected. The purpose of this selection criterion was to safeguard the right of participants by ensuring that they knew what they were agreeing to do.

Word of mouth appeared to be an effective way to pass this opportunity onto others as evidenced by the number of individuals interested in participating in the study who learned about it from both other fathers and professionals. This unexpected snowball sampling effect was apparent on three occasions in which Mexican immigrant mothers contacted the investigator expressing their interest in participating. The fact that mothers contacted the investigator when recruitment efforts were exclusively concentrated on fathers may be explained by taking into consideration translation issues. In fact, the Spanish word for parent is *padre*, which is also the Spanish word for *father*; therefore, when several mothers read the flyer they likely assumed that it concerned both mothers and fathers.

A total of 14 individuals contacted the investigator directly expressing an interest in participating in the study. Three of them learned about the study through their children's school, three others contacted the investigator after listening to the radio broadcast, and one of them found a flyer at a grocery store. Of the remaining seven interested individuals, three were mothers and four fathers did not contact the investigator after learning what the study involved. Staff members from three different health centers contacted the investigator, inquired information about the study, and then proceeded to hand out flyers to their clients. As a result, the investigator was able to

make contact with twelve more fathers, of which: two did not follow through, and the other two did not seem to be articulate or utterly interested, which was difficult to assess accurately given that such selection step took place over the phone. Yet, the difference between these two fathers and the remaining eight, who appeared more enthusiastic and interested, was a strong criterion to make a decision.

In sum, the investigator recruited and interviewed a total of 15 participants ($n = 15$). This total number was not a pre-established goal but the result of having reached the saturation point (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), that is, when the data being obtained began to be redundant, and descriptions provided by the participants evoked similar themes.

Data Collection

Within the boundaries established by conscious efforts to safeguard participants' safety, the investigator remained "open to creative ways to enhance data collection" (Glesne, 1999). From this vantage point, this study drew from long interviews and field observations. Several other rich sources of data, typically used in anthropological designs, such as journals (van Manen, 1990) and photographs (Collier & Collier, 1986), would have also been of value; however, the investigator did not request either of these artifacts in order to protect participants' anonymity but remained open to fathers' intention to share these if had they chosen to do so.

In phenomenological research, the long interview is the typical method to collect data about the issue under study. The phenomenological interviews in this study consisted of informal and interactive processes and the use of open-ended questions and comments (Moustakas, 1994). However, it is safe to contend that the interviews began at the moment participants contacted the investigator and they were being screened, based on their perceived level of motivation. All interviews began with a social conversation, usually unrelated to the questionnaire. This way, in a safe environment, a

rapport was established by thanking fathers for their time and participation, and by asking whether they were comfortable and ready to begin. This step is described in detail in Chapter Four. Fathers were asked to read and sign the informed consent (Spanish version) while the investigator reiterated his commitment to confidentiality and their anonymity.

Here it is appropriate to point out that the investigator never assumed that either rapport-building or participants' disclosure was going to be attained easily because the participants and he shared several demographic traits. As an inquirer with a level of education higher than that of the participants, and with entitlements and rights they did not qualify for, the investigator was keenly aware of the power differentials and the vulnerability of the sample. As Fetterman (1998) notes, a primordial element common to every protocol is the investigator's respect for the culture of the group under study. This study espoused the ontological assumption that realities are constructed by the participants in their social settings. The investigator engaged in careful interaction and long conversations with the participants while reminding himself that not only was he going to learn from each father but also *with* each father. For the first time, several fathers would disclose in interviews memories and feelings they seldom revisited. This level of interaction in research is consistent with Moustakas' (1994) view of research participants as *co-investigators*; both investigator and each father were active learners, congruent with a constructivist paradigm that suggests that knowledge is co-created.

This study used a semistructured interview protocol that consisted of seven open-ended questions (see Appendix C). The questionnaire was not handed out to participants; however, one was also developed in Spanish (see Appendix D) in the event that fathers wanted to read the questions. The questionnaire served the purpose of guiding the interview into a place in which the investigator was able to obtain data that were significant, both in quantity and depth. The questions were used as footsteps into

the field in which the phenomenon was described by the fathers with sincerity and emotion. Each interview lasted an average of two and a half hours, with the shorter ones lasting approximately two hours and the longer ones barely passing the three-hour mark. Eight fathers met with the investigator and were interviewed at the health centers where they expressed an interest in participating. The rest of the fathers were interviewed at locations of their choosing, such as cafes and restaurants. All interviews were carried out in Spanish and audio taped. They were transcribed and simultaneously translated into English by the investigator.

The feminist literature suggests that for interviewing to be successful, significant shared culture must exist between participant and investigator (Rubin & Rubin, 1995); however, this contention does not account for language interpretation/translation accuracy. Concerns may arise in regard to the validity of data obtained in Spanish and eventually translated and transcribed into English. Not only have interpreters and their level of language proficiency been problematic in cross-cultural research but also their ability for cultural understanding. Both linguistic and conceptual equivalence are fundamental. Therefore, on two occasions the investigator consulted with a Spanish language instructor, native from Mexico, in order to seek clarification and gain understanding on expressions and words typical only of the Mexican language. This step was taken in order to avoid inaccurate translation and; therefore, wrong interpretation of data. As Mangen (1999) notes, the challenges of working in more than one language are especially delicate in interpersonal research that seeks to explore appraisal and emotional responses.

Data Analysis Procedures

Qualitative studies generally gather vast amounts of information, requiring the undertaking of a lengthy, intense, and often solitary and painstaking stage: the analysis of the data, which in phenomenological studies involves reducing the data into themes

and making interpretations. The analysis of data used in this study follows the steps of phenomenological research outlined by Moustakas (1994). This process consists of *Epoche or bracketing*, which entails developing the ability to filter out preconceptions to avoid inserting hypotheses and questions into the study; *phenomenological reduction*, which involves describing in a textural manner what the investigator sees and hears, and which is comprised of three steps: (1) *horizontalizing*, drawing from the text and listing all significant statements relevant to the topic, (2) *clustering the horizons into themes*, or grouping significant statements into themes; and (3) *completing a textural description of the experience*, which involves completing a composite description of the meanings of the experience that represents all participants. These steps are described in detail in Chapter Four.

Researcher Bias

As readers come across this study, they must understand how the investigator became interested in the phenomenon of cross-border fathering. For this understanding to occur, a brief introduction of the investigator, as a man, as a social work professional, and as a scholar, is appropriate. It goes without saying that the investigator – by virtue of being an immigrant male of Latin American cultural heritage residing in the U.S. – could not only identify with these fathers to some extent but also project some of his experience onto the study. Inadvertently, the investigator's interest in this group and this phenomenon sparked early in his education while he was completing his Masters in Social Work. It was while working on an independent study with Latino parents that he became aware of the immigration pattern described as *step-wise migration* (Conway, 1980), *chain migration* (Lamm & Imhoff, 1985) or *immigration multiplier* (Jasso & Rosenzweig, 1986) whereby children are left in the sending country while their migrating parents settle and seek better opportunities in other countries. Initially, the investigator's attention focused on the needs of these children; an interest that grew stronger with his

practice as a clinical social worker specializing in child victims of abuse and neglect. It was not until a few years later that he – while engaging in research to meet the requirements for his candidacy – noticed the dearth of research on Mexican immigrant fathers.

Nonetheless, this discovery – seemingly unrelated to the investigator's life – marked the beginning of a personal journey dedicated to exploring his own relationship with his father who, all through the investigator's childhood, traveled continuously within Argentina and outside its borders for work purposes. Looking back, it is not surprising that he would focus on children left behind by their parents. It is much less surprising that the investigator would focus on fathers as a way to understand his father's experience.

As a scholar, intrigued by the phenomenon of cross-border fathering, the investigator purposefully sought low- to medium-income Mexican immigrant fathers because they comprise an at-risk population by virtue of the state of poverty they leave in Mexico, the perils they encounter to migrate to the U.S., and the challenges they face as they settle in a new social context, first alone and then with their families. It was the investigator's assumption (and bias) that participants for this study would be found not in settings that hire professional and/or high-skilled Mexican immigrant fathers (i.e.: corporations, universities, etc.) but social systems more likely to come in contact and meet the needs of low- to medium-income Latino families, such as public schools, public health services, and stores and restaurants.

Being aware of his personal, professional, and academic predispositions, the investigator made a conscious effort not to filter out unpleasant or uncomfortable experiences that would trigger negative biases against the participants. On the contrary, it is implicit in the purpose of this study that what is sought after is the whole experience of the fathers as they perceive it, not just an aspect that might be seen as either *right* or

wrong, or *healthy* or *unhealthy*. The purpose was to capture the phenomenon as they appraised it. Efforts to address these biases are discussed in Chapter Four.

Consistent with qualitative methods, this study relied on naturalistic research terms, equivalent to quantitative approaches to validity. A verification criteria appropriate with a naturalistic paradigm is outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as they prescribe a succession of steps that support the credibility of findings and, therefore, persuade the reader that such findings are worth-considering.

Trustworthiness

An essential aspect of this chapter is concerned with efforts to ensure rigor. Although equating 'rigor' with 'valid' "contradicts philosophical positions regarding social construction and the acknowledgment of multiple realities" (Lietz, Langer, & Furman, 2006, p. 441), our concern with the issue of trustworthiness must not be avoided regardless of the epistemological approach used by the investigator. In qualitative designs, it is assumed that the investigator has a direct influence on the epistemological foundation of the research. However, if clear criteria are stated by the investigator then the reader has the necessary tools to assess the trustworthiness of the research. Thus, it is crucial that that investigator set forth a clear basis for such assessment. A discussion of four general criteria follows.

Credibility.

Credibility is a major trustworthiness criterion from the viewpoint of the information sources. Without such credibility, those reading the final report cannot regard the findings and conclusions as credible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation, or the reliance on several data-gathering methods, is pivotal to increasing confidence in research findings as it counteracts any threat to validity (Glesne, 1999). As detailed above, this study draws on a combination of techniques to collect data, including both long interviews and participant observations. Prolonged engagement, which is

understood as learning about the culture of the participants, assessing misinformation, and building trust (Lincoln & Guba) was a crucial aspect of this research insofar as: (1) the participants were willing and available to meet with the investigator more than once, if necessary, and (2) the participants felt comfortable sharing more than what they discussed in the interviews.

Peer review and debriefing provide an objective and neutral check of the research process. Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to peer debriefers as 'devil's advocates' who promote the investigator's self-awareness and honesty. As a vital component of the treatment of data, preliminary and ongoing data analyses were performed whereby monthly and bimonthly submissions of significant statements drawn from the interviews with early identified themes were sent to dissertation committee members. These comprised preliminary coding, which – as a result of the feedback received – helped the investigator to begin organizing the data and continue staying focused on the purpose of the study.

The data and preliminary analyses were shared with fellow doctoral students completing a course on qualitative methods who acted as devil's advocates as well and other school faculty who shared their insights as experts and consultants. It was while receiving feedback from fellow students and faculty that the investigator learned that the study would further benefit from: (1) follow-up interviews with a few of the fathers, (2) closer attention to the way with which the questions were being asked and the responses acknowledged by the investigator, (3) an increase of the sample size, and (4) an inclusion of professionals working with this population as a way to obtain more data that would enhance the understanding of this phenomenon. The investigator pointed out that what fellow students might have perceived as the investigator's reluctance to go with the flow of the interview, when fathers recalled and discussed painful events, was a

conscious effort to maintain boundaries in order to avoid engaging in counseling with the participants, and monitor subjectivity and intersubjectivity Glesne (1999).

As a result, four follow-up interviews were completed, which satisfied the need to know more about how the participants perceived their roles as fathers. In addition, the sample size was expanded to seek between 15 and 20 fathers, as opposed to the initially proposed sample size of 12 fathers. Professionals with significant experience working with this population were sought. The process of gathering data from these individuals is discussed in the section that pertains to triangulated data.

In an effort to establish credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the investigator was able to ensure that five Mexican immigrant fathers would contact him again with the purpose of meeting one more time to verify whether the investigator's perceptions reflected their experiences. This step was carried out by contacting gatekeepers. This process, termed 'member check,' was an effective way to keep the study in the direction it was designed to go. In this study, member check was first used when the investigator completed the four follow-up interviews mentioned above, at which time he summarized and articulated for the fathers the main points from the first interviews. These follow-up interviews proved challenging in a two-fold sense. Typically, in interviews carried out and transcribed in the same language, the investigator provides copies of the transcribed interviews to the participants, while sharing any early data analysis or reactions. In this case, the interviews, which had been carried out in Spanish and later transcribed in English, required that the investigator translated out loud into Spanish for the participants their responses originally told in Spanish. All four participants stated that the investigator's recording was accurate.

Reflecting on this verification effort, it would appear as if the investigator had to confirm his accurate understanding of the narratives shared by the fathers, his ability to translate/transcribe from Spanish to English, and his ability to translate the same data

back into Spanish. Member check provides the opportunity to assess intentionality and correct errors as well as augment data if participants volunteer additional information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); of course, as long as cross-language issues are taken into consideration. Having had the opportunity to rely on a native speaker from Mexico to seek clarification on expressions and slang typical of Mexico was an asset to this study. A final validation, a second member-check, was completed by returning to five of the interviewed participants. The unsurprising difficulty with contacting all interviewed fathers is further described in Chapter Five.

Triangulation.

Professionals with significant experience working with this population were sought. *Significant experience* implied that these professionals had to have – at least – five years of experience working with Mexican immigrant fathers and their families. A qualified professional could belong to any helping profession such as, social work, medicine, counseling, pastoral counseling, and also education. Professionals were sought and found in organizations and agencies that provide services to this population.

Eight professionals were contacted by phone and email. Five interviews were completed. They included three professionals who provide case management services, one who provides home-based counseling, and one member of the clergy. Because there was no interview protocol specifically developed for these participants, each interview began with the question: “Based on your work with Mexican immigrant fathers, what are your impressions about them?” These interviews took place in locations of their choosing such as their offices, the investigator’s office, and a restaurant. Interviews were not audio taped but, instead, the investigator jotted down their responses and at the end of each interview he read out-loud their responses for accuracy of data gathering. Their responses are provided and discussed in Chapter Four.

Dissertation committee members and the investigator maintained communication via email and telephone, and face-to-face meetings. Preliminary data analyses containing significant statements and initial themes were emailed to the committee. The feedback received encouraged the investigator to observe from other angles the significant statements abstracted from the data. In addition, the feedback helped the investigator stay focused on the phenomenon under study, especially after the first interviews were completed. Cross-checking with committee members was ongoing and ensured continued clarification and corroboration.

Transferability.

This study is completed in thick descriptive detail, allowing the reader to reach a conclusion as to whether the transfer of findings to a similar cohort would be possible. The descriptions in Chapter Four contain a vast source of data illustrating memories, feelings, and events as told by the participants and the major themes identified by the investigator. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the thick description incorporates details that can produce for the reader the feeling that he is experiencing, or could experience, the phenomenon as narrated by the participants. Congruent with Denzin (1988) who notes that the thick description is expected to probe “the intentions, motives, meanings, contexts, situations and circumstances of action” (p. 39), the accounts told in the next chapter clearly illustrate the participants’ experiences through several social contexts. Based on the responses obtained from the five professionals interviewed, these findings are congruent with their impressions of these fathers – with a few but worth-noting exceptions. The question remained whether they could be transferred to other groups. The answer to this question is supported by results drawn by a literature review that continued throughout the study.

Dependability.

In order to assess the process of inquiry, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest the participation of an auditor or auditors who are expected to engage in a series of steps aimed at examining how the project was designed. These steps include the assessment of methodological decisions, inquirer bias, handling of data, and sampling and triangulation decisions. Lincoln and Guba recommend that auditors or *external auditors* should have no connection to the study at all. From this vantage point, fellow students, other faculty, and colleagues became reliable auditors.

Naturally, the following was discussed with the dissertation committee: sampling and recruitment procedures, data gathering, potential risks and benefits for the participants, and the handling of the data. In addition, these issues were addressed and documented on several occasions during IRB continuing reviews, which were appropriate opportunities to receive feedback from scholars not involved in the study. Furthermore, peer review of data and preliminary analyses were pivotal to this study. As mentioned earlier, the investigator met with eight doctoral students during a qualitative methods class during which, as effective devil's advocates, they questioned the investigator's method, interviewing, and data analysis. The feedback received prompted the investigator to exercise more self-awareness regarding the way in which the interviews were conducted. Fellow students indicated that the investigator should have further explored certain events and feelings described by the participants. Although serious consideration was given to this observation, the investigator was able to gather data within the boundaries established by the research design, that is, by acting as an inquirer not as a clinician. Also, the meaning the investigator gave to the descriptions was shared and discussed, resulting in the identification of themes that were then beginning to emerge.

Confirmability of Findings.

This step takes into account issues concerned with objectivity. As already mentioned, the investigator recognized that he could not entirely remove his subjective influence from the study. Confirmability pertains to the degree to which the findings could be confirmed or corroborated by others. A major issue in inductive analysis is “the confrontation of the generalization with the evidence and the determination of the degree of probability which the evidence offers for the generalization” (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 101). Confirmability is concerned with whether or not the findings, interpretations, and conclusions are supported by the data (Creswell, 1998).

Data obtained are exemplified by field observation, including moments before and after the interviews took place; audio tapes and transcribed interviews; emails with committee members, faculty, and other sources; a notebook that served as a journal where initial themes, hunches and questions were recorded; and lists of significant statements or *horizons* leading to clusters of meanings. These items comprise the bulk of raw data. Further, one of the advantages of phenomenological studies is the availability of thick descriptions which comprised the research findings. Reading the participants’ descriptions, filled with vivid recollections of the phenomenon, evokes many images that help the reader imagine what the phenomenon must have been like for the participants as well as for other individuals who experience it also.

Having articulated the methodology of this study as well as the verification steps, an in-depth data analysis process that follows the steps of phenomenological research outlined by Moustakas (1994) is presented and discussed in Chapter Four. The findings are provided in thick description, which include not only the experiences of the participants but also the context in which they manifest, a unique opportunity that allows the reader to give meaning to Mexican immigrant fathers’ experiences.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This chapter provides the findings from the study which was conducted by following the steps of phenomenological reduction. The findings are presented in thick description and rich detail. Themes that emerge from the interviews are discussed and supported by the conceptual and empirical literature. The chapter ends with a description of the essential constituents of cross-border fathering, that which typifies the experience of all fathers in the sample.

Subjectivity into Consideration

Subjectivity is fundamental to qualitative research considering that one must be able to understand how personal beliefs and experience may affect not only the data analysis process but other steps previously taken from the moment the investigator and the subject make contact. Monitoring subjectivity does not imply controlling for subjectivity (Glesne, 1999) but, on the contrary, it entails increasing our awareness of the ways in which subjectivity might affect research both positively and negatively. Therefore, in this study, such awareness created a state of vigilance in the investigator, not aimed at discarding personal beliefs and feelings but to welcome them and explore how they collide and amalgamate with the study.

Chapter One established the theoretical grounding of this study in which the investigator contended that interpretation was unlikely to be unfettered by his perception. The investigator, aware of the impossibility of totally cleansing his perception from assumptions, prior knowledge, and belief system, adopted a vantage point of unknowing in which he listened to participants with what Munhall (2007) refers to as “the third ear,” free, as much as possible, of any prejudice or bias. Further, participants are not passive agents in the study but, quite the contrary; they are co-investigators who – as such – co-create knowledge with the investigator. This process described by Munhall as

“decentering” was a conscious effort on the part of the investigator to obtain raw data from the moment phone contact was made with prospective participants; a conscious effort to usher himself into a place of unknowing.

Intersubjectivity

The subjectivities that give this research its shape are not only the investigator’s. On the contrary, they are the result of interactions between the participants and the investigator, giving birth to a unique gestalt that lives during the qualitative interview, integrating all the ingredients that both participant and investigator bring into the field. Field Theory contends that:

The field perspective allows us to think of perception as a relational product that functions best when our thinking is totally centered on the contact boundary and thus grasping both what is internal and what is external – both the self’s needs or experiences and the environment’s demands or conditions. Specific to this theory is the fact that the self is *midway* between the organism and the environment and thus in a uniquely relational position. (Spagnulolo Lobb & Lichtenberg, 2005, p. 26)

This framework emphasizes the uniqueness of the investigator-participant dyad as it manifested during each interview. As anticipated and discussed in Chapter Three, rapport-building was at times challenging in several ways. The participants displayed a receptive disposition from the beginning, inviting the investigator to ask questions and igniting his curiosity, as evidenced by the statement made by Father Two over the phone:

A lot of things have happened to me and to my family to be here. If you have the time, I’d like to tell you about it.

Similarly, Father Three indicated:

I haven’t thought about what I went through until I was asked to participate in this study. Then, I began to have dreams about my family in Mexico, my children...It’s strange.

Father Seven expressed his desire to participate while consequently asking for help:

The teacher gave me your information about the study, and your name and phone number so maybe I would be able to understand my daughter. There’s so much I

don't understand about us coming here, about me, I did what I had to do. If I can help you, maybe you can help me.

Such disposition but especially the affect displayed by most of these fathers encouraged the investigator to enter a field inhabited by powerful emotions. Rapport-building required a delicate dance of empathy and inquiry on a floor of constant self-awareness. As Glesne (1999) advises, "the goal is to get as fully as possible in touch with the embodied self who performs the acts of research" (p. 111).

Data Analysis

Consistent with the naturalistic paradigm, this study's data are not understood as given by the natural world as explained by modern science but as arising from the interactions between the investigator and the participants. In this lens, data are the constructions offered by or abiding in the fathers; thus, data analysis "leads to the reconstruction of those constructions" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is the investigator then who invites the participant to share his construction or co-construct meaning with the investigator. The recruitment of participants and data collection procedures were discussed at length in Chapter Three; however, it is appropriate to acknowledge in this section that the data are largely comprised of both transcribed interviews and field notes. Other sources of data were also at hand, creating a fertile continuum of information although these did not directly contribute to the themes and brief description, the end result of phenomenological reduction.

Huberman and Miles (1994) articulate a hierarchical typology of qualitative data based on the degree of abstraction and processing (cooking) of the data. In this study, the *raw* data includes tapes and field notes. The *partially processed* data include transcripts and the investigator's logged comments, and correspondence with the committee. The next level of data, *cooked* data, is represented by codes or categories or abstracted meaning units stemming from both raw and partially processed data, and

correspondence with the research committee. Along the continuum from raw to cooked data, the investigator also documented preliminary themes and amassed artifacts from contemporary popular Mexican culture such as films, books, and song lyrics that portray the phenomenon under study.

In addition, the investigator engaged in field observation during his trips to Mexico in which several conversations with Mexican fathers took place but that – logically – are not part of the data. These observations and conversations in Mexico are discussed in Chapter Five. As part of the triangulation process, five professionals with significant experience working with Mexican immigrant fathers were interviewed and their impressions are documented and discussed in this chapter as well as Chapter Five. Finally, the literature review was an ongoing endeavor until the study was completed. Before delving into the processing of data, a look at the sample under study that summarizes the characteristics of major variables is offered.

A Snapshot of the Sample

Fifteen Mexican immigrant fathers were interviewed ($n = 15$). These fathers are identified with a number from one to 15 which does not reflect the order in which they were interviewed. They comprise a small sample size when compared to quantitative studies; however, there is noticeable variation among them despite the fact that they all share the same country of origin and similar experiences. The following variables were observed: father's age at the time of the interview, years of residence in the U.S., father's age of arrival in the U.S., number of children at the time of the interview, children's ages when the father departed, fathers' length of separation from their children, and children's ages at the time of the interviews. Table 1 shows the five variables mentioned and the values obtained from descriptive statistical analysis.

Table 1

Sample	Mean	Mode	SD	Range	Minimum	Maximum
Mexican Immigrant Fathers ($n = 15$)						
Fathers' age (years)	40.07	39	7.80	27	29	56
Fathers' age at arrival (years)	29.87	21	6.30	17	21	38
Years of residence in U.S.	10.20	9	6.72	29	4	33
Number of children	2.40	2	1.24	4	1	5
Length of separation (years)	1.60	2	0.84	2.91	0.09	4

In the interviewed sample ($n = 15$), Mexican immigrant fathers were, on average, 40 years old, arrived in the U.S. at age 30 years, have resided in the U.S. approximately ten years, have 2.4 children, and the length of separation from their children from the moment they left Mexico until the family was reunited in the U.S. was 1.6 years. The largest standard deviations noted pertain to scores related to fathers' ages, age of arrival in the U.S., and years of residence, which reveal considerable variability among them. The standard deviation in regard to number of children they have ($SD = 1.24$) shows that there was no significant difference among these fathers in regard to family size. Worth-noting was the length of separation, which ranged from 0.09 years (30 days) to four years. This variable yielded the smallest standard deviation of the sample ($SD = 0.84$ years, or ten months). It is safe to suggest that such small variation is a reflection of the fathers' strong motivation to reunite with their children as soon as they were able.

The mean length of residence in the U.S. ($\bar{x} = 10.2$ years) deserves a brief discussion. Ten years is a long time. This can be explained by the fact that – among this sample – Father Five has been living in the U.S. for the longest time (33 years), which inevitably skews the distribution of values. If he were not in this sample, the mean would

have been 7.2 years, which still represents a considerable length of time. At any rate, either length of time might be long enough for memories to fade and/or to change. Thus, one must consider the accuracy with which past events were retrieved by these fathers. Finally, although it is not shown in the table, it is important to acknowledge that most fathers, 53% of the sample ($n = 8$), migrated with the purpose of settling in the U.S. permanently while the remaining 47% ($n = 7$) initially migrated with the purpose of working in the U.S. and supporting their families from the U.S. but eventually decided to settle permanently.

Treatment of Data

In qualitative research, techniques for data analysis are inductive; that is, moving from the specific to the general. Such techniques are neither aimless nor the product of the investigator's imagination. As Padgett (1998) puts it, "creativity need not detract from rigor" (p. 73). Particularly in phenomenological research, evidence is drawn by the investigator from first-person reports of life experiences. In such fashion and highlighting his role as "human instrument" (Fetterman, 1998, p. 57), the investigator relied on his senses for data collection and analysis. The treatment of data collected followed the analytical steps outlined by Moustakas (1994), which include the investigator bringing his knowledge of the phenomenon and his personal experience into the study, the recording of significant statements, and the development of descriptions to arrive at the essence of the experience. The analytical process is comprised of several important stages: Epoche or bracketing, phenomenological reduction, and the development of a composite description of the meanings and essences of the experience that represents all participants. A discussion of each step follows.

Epoche

In phenomenological research, Epoche is the first step in learning about things. Epoche refers to sorting out judgment, biases, and preconceived ideas about

phenomena (Moustakas, 1994). In Husserlian terms, Epoche refers to freedom from suppositions, a state of awareness reached by invalidating, inhibiting, and disqualifying our loyalty to previous knowledge and experience (Schmitt, 1968). In recognizing that Epoche is a challenging endeavor that requires our openness to capture an experience as it presents itself, Moustakas (1994) notes “what appears before me and in my consciousness is something I know is present regardless of how many others perceive that phenomenon differently” (p. 87). Epoche is best understood as the ideal and most appropriate state of being to face the data: seeing things as they appear, regardless of how many others may have perceived it before. As already noted, this study’s data comprise not only transcribed interviews but also the first moment the investigator made contact with the Mexican immigrant father. Thus, data encompass phone conversations to set up interviews; face-to-face interviews; field notes containing the investigator’s perceptions and hunches; audio-taped interviews; transcribed interviews; member check meetings; and the subsequent process herein described.

The Interview Process

Inevitably, several traits of the investigator’s self were invited into the field in which the interviews took place. Latin American cultural heritage and ethnicity, language, gender, minority status, and experience as an immigrant were ingredients that could not possibly cease to exist during the interviews. Simultaneously, the investigator’s knowledge of the phenomenon, drawn from the literature review and his experience as a clinician were present as well. This awareness and recognition of his own bias embody the investigator’s being-in-the-world frame of mind of which Munhall (2007) speaks when she emphasizes the role of self-awareness in the attainment of knowledge. Decentering demanded that the investigator remind himself of the possibility that his own knowledge and feelings could affect his perception, and of the need to exhaustively engage in Epoche in order to capture the participants’ description of the experience.

During the interview process, it was not uncommon for the investigator to have to remind himself of the boundaries needed to accomplish the task at hand. For instance, one of the most common biases of the investigator was that fathers would lack the ability to make themselves emotionally vulnerable as they share their experiences, memories, and feelings. In his ongoing effort to bracket his biases, not only was the investigator aware of his preconceived ideas about the sample but was also proved wrong by the intense outpouring of emotions from the participants, which at times felt overwhelming. This observation is not meant to imply that all fathers were completely sincere at all times. As a result, during and after the interviews, the investigator dealt with his own emotional reactions to the stories by engaging in self-examination for the sole purpose of minimizing the likelihood that he would ascribe immediate meaning to the data. Such self-examination was also useful when the investigator was faced with fathers' stories of courage, near-death and survival experiences, and the sequelae of trauma. The investigator abstained from counseling, an intervention germane to his training as a clinical social worker, but instead engaged in active listening which nonetheless proved fruitful. The act of listening without prescribing has been utilized as an effective tool in distressful circumstances following traumatic events with individuals who have life-threatening experiences, not unlike several of these fathers.

A study by Mahoney, Chandra, Gambherra, De Silva, and Suveendran (2006) describing the response of mental health counselors to victims of the Boxing Day tsunami in Sri Lanka highlights the value of listening without counseling and prescribing. The authors emphasize that in order to assist victims, counselors had to be able to listen and communicate; be empathic, compassionate, and patient; deal sensitively with distress; be respectful and non-judgmental; and be versatile, accessible and flexible. Further, they warn counselors to refrain from forcing people to relive their experiences, while listening without offering opinions and not diagnosing or labeling people as

suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As a result, professionals gained increased awareness of the negative mental health outcomes as experienced by this population whose personal accounts – despite the facts that they were not receiving ongoing counseling and their language does not have a word for “depression” – were able to reveal a high degree of comorbidity with several disorders, including somatic complaints, eating and sleeping disturbances, and warning signs of suicidal ideation, all learned through the careful act of listening without the interference of one’s assumptions and interventions.

On a similar note, Falicov (2005) suggests that when working with immigrants, inquirers should obtain a ‘migration narrative’ in order to gain access to the individual’s cultural and migratory experiences. Further, Falicov explains that such narrative “helps family members find meaning in their uprooting in terms of a unique personal history and continuity of personal outlook that can incorporate gains as well as losses” (p. 231). This curious and non-judgmental attitude invites the client (in this case, the participant) to share his life trajectory without seeking any immediate relief or prescription to their challenges. During interviews, this curious and empathic stance went beyond listening to stories. It ventured into observing the participants’ faces, hands, and eyes.

The body speaks.

From the moment prospective participants contacted the investigator by phone and also when interviews were scheduled, the tone of voice and perceived degrees of interest in the study were noted, both aiding in the selection process. Following a meeting with each participant, the investigator recorded his initial perceptions, especially on the participants’ attitude and affect. Prior to transcribing each recorded interview, the investigator reviewed his notes and – if applicable – added to them.

Not only was attention given to the participants’ voices but also to their eyes, facial expressions, and postures before and during the interviews; from the moment

hands were shaken to greet one another to the moment both said goodbye. The following field note, following the interview with Father Two, illustrates this act of attending:

He appeared to be shy. The volume of his voice was low. His attitude was humble. As the interview progressed, he seemed to have become more relaxed. His eyes swelled and he cried when recalling and discussing his experience of crossing the border and his feelings of loneliness.

Similarly with Father Six, it was apparent that participants entered the field of the interview with raw emotions and vulnerability:

He appeared shy and uncomfortable, also sad, tired and humble. He looked thin and fragile. His eyes were transparent and his pain obvious.

The interview process with Father Eleven was completely different and filled with several surprises, as recorded in the field notes:

He wasn't very talkative over the phone, which made me question whether he'd be a strong candidate for the study. I asked him why he would like to participate and he responded that he had never talked to anyone about coming to the U.S. and then added: "If you want to hear about it, I'd tell you."

During the interview, he asked me a couple of personal questions, which I took as a sign of comfort with me. He displayed a calm attitude. I did not sense any signs of sadness at all.

Following the interview, he invited me to join him and his family at his daughter's baptism. I was surprised.

He introduced me to his wife and sons. They all shook hands with me (even the two-year-old boy). They displayed a courteous and polite attitude but it was apparent that they had no idea why I was there. There were three other families with children and friends. Most of them greeted me and smiled. Others stared, perhaps wondering who I was.

The house appeared to be a medium-sized home, perhaps with two bedrooms. It was clean and neat, with many signs of Mexican culture: the Virgin of Guadalupe, a Mexican flag on the wall, small framed pictures hung on the wall depicting several rural Mexican settings, burning candles, and there was also Mexican music playing in the background.

A respectful and cooperative attitude was consistently observed in all participants. An array of facial and corporal behaviors manifested throughout the interviews. The most salient were: (1) swelled eyes and tears when discussing painful

memories and feelings of grief; (2) mild excitement and smiling when discussing memories evocative of feelings of pride, satisfaction, and a sense of accomplishment; (3) looking down and looking around the room or out the window, as if trying to hide at a moment of unusual vulnerability with the investigator; (4) short-lived silences suggesting contemplation; and (5) frowning and sudden somberness as they discussed their fears about their children's future and awareness of ongoing raids and deportations.

Surprisingly, all participants expressed words of gratitude for having participated in the study, which was perceived by the investigator as fathers' appreciation for having been listened to. Six participants refused to accept the \$25.00 gift card offered by the investigator but they accepted it upon the investigator's insistence. The varying degrees of vulnerability, trust, and level of comfort displayed by these fathers came as a surprise for the investigator during all interviews, and are best exemplified by a statement made by Father Eight at the end of the interview:

I told you things today that I never told anyone.

This statement parallels Munhall's (2007) discussion of her study with elder mothers whose memories, descriptions, and stories contained vivid details they had never shared with anyone. Several women expressed their gratitude to her for the opportunity that their participation in the research provided to them.

The emotions observed among these fathers are drawn by the investigator's privileged access to the participants' human realm, one that is not readily accessible to perceptual observation. As Polkinghorne (1983) states: "it is a realm of meaning, and because of its nonphysical nature, its phenomena must be approached indirectly – that is, through such publicly accessible manifestations as bodily movements and linguistic expressions" (p. 264). The physical and intuitive fields between the investigator and the participants have been described. It was in such fertile grounds that the data were gathered. The processes that comprise phenomenological reduction are described in the

following pages, culminating in the identification of core themes, and the essence of the experience.

Phenomenological Reduction

Husserl (1970/1936) argued that the aim of phenomenology was to provide fundamental descriptions of phenomena, free from prejudices, theoretical presuppositions and distortions. He identified the need for scientists to observe the world as it is before it is polluted by either the categorization of scientific inquiry or the scientist's assumptions. Phenomenological reduction is also understood as:

the technique whereby this stripping away occurs; and the technique itself has two moments: the first Husserl names *Epoché*, using the Greek term for abstention, and the second is referred to as the reduction proper, an inquiring back into consciousness. (Cogan, 2006, ¶ 2)

This process is a meditative practice, whereby the investigator strives to free himself from what he has accepted all along to be the case about a particular phenomenon. Through this process, the phenomenological investigator is – according to Husserl – carried back (re-duction) from the hitherto naively accepted world of objects, values and other individuals, to the transcendental subjectivity that constitutes them. This step does not only involve seeing but also listening “with a conscious and deliberate intention of opening ourselves to phenomena, in their own right, with their own textures and meanings” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 92). It is with such state of mind that the data analysis was carried out. This attitude began – as mentioned earlier – at the moment when participant and investigator made first contact and continued into the interviews, which had a conversational tone, as opposed to a question-and-answer format. According to van Manen (1990), “the interview is a collaborative conversational structure that lends itself especially well to the task of reflecting on phenomenological meanings” (p. 63). The goal in these interpretive interviews was to capture the entire experience of cross-border fathering, to evoke memories and feelings, and to allow for participant and investigator to

create a gestalt that would remain alive throughout the conversation. After the interviews were completed, and translated and transcribed, the transcripts were read repeatedly in order for the investigator to become increasingly familiar with the data.

1. Horizontalizing

A horizon, as described by Moustakas (1994) is an invariant aspect of the experience; a significant statement that pertains to the experience. A horizon meets two criteria: (1) it contains “a moment of the experience that is a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding it” (p. 121), and (2) it can be drawn from the text and labeled. In this study, horizontalizing entailed the task of identifying statements in the text of the transcripts that met the criteria mentioned above. Statements that did not meet such criteria were eliminated. Repetitive statements were discarded. To clearly understand what a horizon is, let us look at the following passage from Father Five:

I was never afraid or nervous but I didn't like leaving my family alone, as I said before, why to be a father if one cannot be with them? But there was always a lot of work here, so I had to make a choice. I know it's hard for a lot of people. Many people can't make it here. Some people die trying to make it.

One could argue that the entire paragraph has relevance for the study of the phenomenon, but the entire paragraph does not meet the criteria suggested by Moustakas (1994). Therefore, after discarding information that does not pertain to the experience of this father, the following horizons remain and constitute an ‘invariant aspect of the experience:’

I didn't like leaving my family alone. Why to be a father if one cannot be with them?
There was always a lot of work here, so I had to make a choice.

These three horizons are revealing the father's feelings, how he perceives – in part – his role of father, and what influenced his choice.

Horizons were checked against the data to verify that they were consistent with the interviews. What remained were the significant statements that pertain only to the experience under study. Subsequently, a list of significant statements was created for

each father interviewed. A second and third phase of horizontalizing took place with the purpose of looking for and eliminating any repetitive statements that could have remained and were not needed.

2. Clustering Horizons into Themes

The statements that remained were clustered into themes and reflected upon. Often, new themes would seem to manifest but eventually were eliminated. This process required that the investigator: (1) reread the clusters and themes, (2) jot down themes that appeared to emerge, and (3) after removing himself from the data for a few hours or days, reread the clusters again and – if necessary – discard those themes that did not reflect the phenomenon. This cycle speaks of the importance of the process of bracketing, which must not happen only the first time the scientist is confronted with the data, but must be an ongoing effort. The next step involved grouping these themes into major core themes for each individual. These clusters eventually became the core themes of the experience.

3. Textural Description of the Experience

By relying on the coded data, the next step was the creation of textural descriptions of the participants' individual experiences. This step included reflecting on the horizons and assessing the relationships with each other. These relationships comprised the foundation for identifying larger themes. The horizons and themes were recorded as an individual textural description of the essences of the phenomenon for each individual, which comprised a list of direct quotations from the transcripts as evidence (Moustakas, 1994) and provided vivid accounts about the experience. These themes were discovered through the reflection and analysis that take place beyond the appearance of the phenomenon (what the fathers tell) and by looking into the meanings of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

The investigator reflected upon the horizons and the common themes repeatedly. An ongoing dialogue with himself evolved throughout the completion of the study and upon which he challenged his assumptions and analyses. Husserl (1970/1936) called this reflection 'imaginative variation.' Stones (1988) refers to it as a tool for the investigator to reflect "on the imagined possibilities inherent in each central theme and discard those that do not withstand criticism" (p. 154). Imaginative variation entails entertaining other possible meanings, looking at the phenomenon from several vantage points, free fantasy association, and an ongoing exploration of assumptions.

These steps indicate that the process of phenomenological reduction begins with a collection of pre-reflective facts, that is, the statements of those who have experienced the phenomenon: Mexican immigrant fathers. Later, it evolves from the realm of facts to the realm of ideas, as core themes derive from ongoing reflection on the invariant constituents (horizons) of the experience for each participant. As a result of this process, nine themes emerged from and were common to the descriptions. These themes were repeatedly referred back to the data for validation purposes; that is, (1) to assess whether anything of relevance in the interviews was not accounted for in the clusters and themes, and (2) to assess whether the clusters and themes suggested anything that was not present in the interviews.

The formulated meanings are organized into the nine core themes described below. Furthermore, in order to capture the cultural underpinning of the phenomenon and the meaning abstracted from the participants' transcribed interviews, these themes are first articulated in Spanish, followed by their equivalent translation into English.

First theme: Cruzando para poder ser padre – Crossing to be able to be a father.

Consistently throughout the sample, fathers' motivation to cross the border is to escape poverty by seeking work opportunities in the U.S., not unlike García's (1985) concept of 'economic refugees.' By coming to the U.S., they hope to successfully fulfill

their perceived roles as fathers. There are no exceptions. An observable fact throughout the sample is that most fathers migrated with the purpose of settling in the U.S. permanently while the rest initially migrated with the plan of working in the U.S., saving money, supporting their families, and eventually re-migrating to Mexico. This change of plans is not unusual among this population group. When discussing transborder mothering, Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) reports that by 1990 the length of separation among families split between Mexico and the U.S. had shortened to an average of two years, which is consistent with the average length of separation reported by these fathers. However, in the mid-1990s the situation changed as a result of the implementation of increased border barriers, patrolling, and rising costs of traveling back-and-forth between both countries. It is not surprising then that many people choose to settle in the U.S. permanently.

The need to escape from poverty is a common mantra across the data set. Father Three provides a powerful description of his life in poverty as he explains his decision to leave:

Looking back, it seems it was the right thing to do ... we all were poor there, my family, our families, you know? I had nothing. We had no money. We were a poor family. Our life was difficult there. People think that one should get used to it, being so poor I mean, after 20 years of growing up there, like that, but I had to find something, a way to get out of being so poor. There's no way you could ever get used to it.

Similarly, Father Three describes his family's struggle with poverty and hunger:

Sometimes we had food but sometimes we didn't and we had to ask other people for help. The children went to school but sometimes they were barefoot. I couldn't buy clothes for them. I never knew that kind of poverty before I had children.

For six fathers, the persuasive event that ignited their interest in cross-border fathering was an occurrence that most people would regard as a normal life event, the birth of a child. Clearly, such an event implies more expenses for any family anywhere in the world, and to a lesser or greater extent it may represent a significant stressor (Hamilton,

McCubbin, & Patterson, 1985). However, for any family with scarce resources, the birth of a child might prove overwhelming and anxiety-provoking. This event presented more demands to the father by worsening an existing stressful situation, such as financial hardship or poverty. His decision to migrate is informed by a sudden sense of responsibility and urgency. Father Seven explains:

I got married and, to make the situation more complicated, we had a baby on its way. My wife got pregnant almost at the same time I lost my job.

Other stressors contributed to fathers' decision to migrate, such as the need to pay a debt. As he recalls his inability to pay the hospital bills resulting from his youngest son's surgery, Father Ten recalls:

He was in the hospital for nine days. They took good care of him. They saved him. But the bills were very high and we didn't have any kind of insurance. I wasn't making enough to make any payment. Basically, I wasn't paying anything because I couldn't.

Father Six also describes a situation involving the need to pay back money he owed:

I remember now that when I borrowed that money I was already wondering how I was going to pay it back to her. I knew it wasn't going to be easy. I had difficulty paying my debt back because I wasn't making enough money at my job. One day, she threatened me with taking me to court if I didn't pay her back. I was very scared, very worried about my family and our home, afraid that my children would end living in the streets. I didn't know what to do. If I went to jail, I would have abandoned my family.

Worth-noting in this description is Father Six's appraisal of imprisonment as abandonment of his family, while not feeling the same way about crossing the border. This perception could be explained by arguing that the former is appraised as unproductive, shame-producing, and passive, and leads to entropy. The latter implies action, opportunity, and hope. Another common concept repeated by the participants or evoked by their accounts was *desperation* in the midst of their sense of helplessness and inability to meet their families' needs.

Father One, who had two children, ages one and three years when he left, states:

I think I'd be desperate all the time if I didn't have anything to give them, to take care of them with.

Similarly, Father Two, who at the time of his departure had three children, ages ten, eleven, and twelve years, recalls:

Your children need more than survival. So, I felt desperate, without hope. I had to do something.

Father Eight's son was six years-old when he left for the U.S. As he recalls the pain of living in poverty, he states:

I don't even want to talk about that today. We were poor, so poor that my wife cried in desperation sometimes, I didn't know what to do.

Father Nine, while describing his feeling of sudden responsibility of being a father and experiencing poverty and desperation, recalls:

Suddenly, I had this big responsibility that I didn't have before and I was feeling so alone, so helpless, desperate. It was a mixture of feelings.

Father Ten, as he describes the anticipation of more financial constraints and responsibilities, says:

I was desperate. My oldest child was going to start school the following year. You know how expensive school is in Mexico. Our debt was big.

Thinking about the lack of opportunities he experienced in Mexico, Father Fifteen recalls:

I would still be in Guadalajara if it wasn't because there were no opportunities for me and I was so afraid of not being able to provide my children with the security they needed.

Interestingly enough, in his article on the phenomenology of despair, Steinbock (2007) notes that – although the term *desperation* etymologically means 'without hope' – in reality it means all the opposite: hope taken to an extreme, a last hope or another hope. This clarification was useful for the investigator because it helped make a connection between the fathers' perceived absolute helplessness and the subsequent motivation to undertake a significant task to change a present situation.

In the aforementioned passages, it is clear that fathers regard their roles as providers or breadwinners as tantamount to fatherhood. Father Five provides a compelling explanation of his perceived role as father:

If I cannot provide them at least with food, why be a father? Once you made a commitment to have a family, then, one has to have the obligation to provide for and support them...even when the children are adults and get married, a father is always present ...as long as I'm around, I'm not going to give up on them.

The life-changing decision to migrate to the U.S. in order to provide for the family is not an easy one. Several powerful feelings collide in the father's heart as he entertains the idea of separation from the family, its impact on all family members but especially the children, and the anticipation of threatening situations ahead such as crossing the border and – once settled in the U.S. – being able to find employment and sustain the family as planned.

Simultaneously, several resources are supportive of this major decision and contribute to the father's confidence. One of them is the anecdotal knowledge of the experience of migration and resettlement in the U.S. It was not uncommon for these fathers to have known about this possibility from various sources, especially the awareness of migration as a possibility for sustenance, a possibility that permeates through Mexican culture (García, 1985). Father Eight exemplifies this phenomenon with this remark:

One hears so many good things about the U.S., all good things, things that give you hope, you know? I grew hearing that one can make money very easily and have anything he wants, a nice house, a car, and send the kids to school for free.

Consistent with González (1999) and his concept of *transnational migrant circuits*, the other supportive factor was the fact that thirteen of these fathers had some type of relationship with a friend or a relative in the U.S. prior to migrating, which made possible for them to carry out their plans. Father One borrowed money from his sister who lives in the U.S. Others decided to take on the journey with someone they knew.

Father Two crossed the border with two friends and Father Seven crossed with a friend from work. Father Eight crossed with his uncle who encouraged him to move to the U.S. during his last visit to Mexico. Others have previous personal experience, or first-hand experience. Before settling in the U.S. permanently, Father Five and Father Eleven used to cross the border back-and-forth and so did Father Ten who states:

I had been to the U.S. once before, working in the harvest in California, only for four months and I didn't stay. I didn't want to stay. When I was in California, I wasn't married and didn't have children. This time was different. This time, I had a wife and children, a family to be responsible for. Before, it really didn't matter if something happened to me. This time, I knew it was different.

Familial support, available on both sides of the border, is also a significant factor in the decision-making process involved when crossing is considered. In Mexico, family members engage in supportive efforts – not atypical throughout Latin American culture – to help the father with his decision. In the sample interviewed, these efforts are displayed in several forms, from sharing a home with the father's wife and children after his departure, to offering and giving advice to the father and his family. As Father One states:

It was her family who talked to her about the idea for us to come here and then she talked to me about it. It was a difficult decision but once I got here, we realized that it was the best decision for us.

Father Four describes the participation of the entire family in this decision-making process:

My wife and I talked and talked about it. My mother didn't want me to come either but my father saw the advantages of crossing to come here and find a better life. He talked to her about it and I think that helped a lot. So, after my father talked to her, she was more open about the idea.

Father Eight recalls his mother's involvement in his decision:

My mother knew how I was feeling and struggling and had been talking to my uncle. So, he approached me one day and talked to me about coming here. My uncle offered some money to help us, help my wife when I was gone.

Father Thirteen describes the support received by the clergy in order to assist him and his wife to process their feelings together about his decision:

We never imagined having come up with such a plan. It was very strange. We went to see our priest one day. I wanted to talk with her and the priest at the same time. I wanted the priest's counsel and I wanted my wife to believe that I was doing this for us and that I was coming back home.

As he recalls the support received by his in-laws, Father Fifteen states:

Her father, being so close to retirement and having lived all his life in Mexico, thought that this was an opportunity I had to take advantage of. He was very kind to me. He talked to me like a son and said: you have to do what you think is important for your family, your children especially. What future waits for them here? What future waits for you two here?

These narratives are also revealing of the wife's difficulty with accepting the father's decision. Without a doubt, it is a decision that causes uncomfortable feelings for the father but perhaps more so for the wife as she confronts new fears. As Father Thirteen states when recalling his wife's reaction to his decision:

She was scared and upset with me. She didn't believe I was going to cross. She had all the worries that made sense and that I had too: How were we going to pay the rent? How were we going to maintain the family, the boys? How long was it going to take for me to get settled and begin to send some money?

The first narratives of this theme, *Cruzando para poder ser padre – Crossing to be able to be a father*, depict these fathers' unequivocal commitment to their children's well-being amidst the lack of opportunity to fulfill such commitment in Mexico. They speak of an intimate and often silent conflict beginning with the desire and responsibility to care for and provide for his children that sooner or later evolves into desperation or as Steinbock (2007) claims: "hope taken to an extreme" (p. 438). From these descriptions, it is clear that they would have not chosen to migrate to the U.S. unless they felt the need to do so. The lack of work opportunities and instability, and the helplessness experienced resulting in new ways to feel hopeful about life, compel these fathers to entertain the idea to cross the border and support their families from the U.S. Despite the risks involved, the feasibility of this strategy is known to them because it has been

successfully carried out by others. Anecdotal knowledge of the experience is a motivating factor. So is personal experience from having previously lived and worked in the U.S. Nonetheless, as seen throughout the sample, the validation and support from loved ones is another motivating factor, perhaps the most powerful.

Due to precipitating events such as marriage or the birth of a child which compounded the family's existing scarcity, the inability to pay debts, or simply a life-long struggle with poverty, these fathers' accounts tell about the fear of being defeated by poverty with the resulting inability to provide for their children. As a father, being defeated by poverty implies not fulfilling the role of father. It is evidenced throughout the sample that these fathers wrestle the most with their inability – caused by lack of opportunity – to provide for their children and secure stability. Although the investigator concurs with the fact that during the past few decades, with more women in the labor force and more men sharing parenting responsibilities, the father's role in the family has significantly changed (Cabrera et al., 2000) even in Latin America, most fathers still perceive themselves as the breadwinner for the family.

Further, the evidence suggests that the validating and supporting roles of the family and the community are pivotal in the father's ability to journey across the border in order to fulfill what he seriously perceives to be his role and responsibilities. The role of the family and the community in Mexico as well as across countries is described in the following theme.

Second theme: En familia – We are among friends.

With the exception of Fathers Twelve and Fourteen, whose wives were supportive of their decisions without hesitation, fathers in this sample recall their wives' reactions as a significant struggle adding more stress to an already challenging situation. The role of family members, relatives, and friends supporting the father's decision, crossing and resettlement; promoting good communication and understanding between

the father and his wife; and also supporting both the father and his wife financially throughout this experience evoke the presence of a vast network of family and friends. The active agents in this system are not simply related by family ties and bloodline but also friendship that often develops into kinship and whose synergy encompasses two countries, nurturing and supporting across borders. In Latin American culture, the expression 'en familia' literally translates into 'we are with family;' however, its real meaning speaks of 'la confianza' or the mutual trust and reliance that exist among individuals and families.

Throughout the sample, it is obvious that family members and friends alike join together to assist the father and his family along this experience. New relationships form and support systems develop. For instance, both Fathers One and Eight recall having borrowed money from a sister and an uncle respectively in order to carry out their plans. Father Two remembered that he came to Indiana because he had a friend here; however, when he arrived, his friend had moved. Together with three men he met when he was crossing, he decided to rent an apartment and carpool to work. Father Three describes his arrival with other men and how together they began to settle in the U.S. He also explains how – after two years – he continued to rely on a newly formed system of support:

I didn't know where to go. I walked around town, walking toward downtown with the other guys that crossed with me. We learned about a homeless shelter and stayed there for three months. I got a job in construction and sometimes cleaning offices. One day I was able to have some money saved and got an apartment with two other guys and stayed with them for two years.

On the Mexican side, Father Three would be able to communicate with his family who did not have a phone by calling a store nearby whose staff would bring his wife and child to the phone.

Father Four recalls the support that he and his wife received while they were separated:

When I left, she was only three months pregnant. Leaving them was very hard for me to do, knowing also how hard it was for her. I know it was harder for her. But I had peace of mind knowing that she was with my parents. Once I got here and was with my brother, it wasn't so hard because I could talk about all this with him.

As he recalls his plan to settle in the U.S., Father Six describes how he took advantage of the family resources he had:

The other important thing about my decision was that my wife had a nephew and his wife living here. He and his wife were very open to the idea. They didn't have children yet and they figured that another hand, another income to help them pay the rent and other expenses would be good.

Further, Father Six discusses the support his wife and children received from the family after he migrated to the U.S.:

She couldn't afford to pay the rent anymore so she and the children had moved in with her parents long before she crossed.

Father Seven tells about the peace of mind he felt in knowing that his wife and daughters were going to be in good company when he was away from home:

The girls were only one and two years old when I left. My wife and the girls had her parents, other relatives, grandparents, and knowing that made me feel better about leaving them for a while.

Father Eight tells at length the support he received from his uncle as he encouraged him to come to the U.S. and provided him with work once he was settled:

My uncle said "let's go, you can't do anything here to make things better, you want your child to have a future..." and I thought he was right. My uncle had a lawn-care business, so I worked with him and other guys for a few months. All I did then was going to work and coming back home with him.

Father Nine describes how his relationship with his cousin was significant for him:

I had an older cousin in California. He was practically raised by my mother. We grew up together. After he crossed and got settled in California, he used to tell me about what it would be like to come here, work, and make some money to take care of my family.

Father Ten recalls the several relationships he formed while he was alone in the U.S. working and saving to support his family:

When I came to Indiana, I lived in a shelter too, not for a long time. When I was able to share the rent with three other guys, I left the shelter. Again, I found work in construction, painting, working in people's yards, gardening, whatever I could do, I would do ...I would send any money to my wife and children I could. I lived with different people because, you know, people come and go, get married, or go back to Mexico. By the third year, I was sharing a house with two guys, two brothers, and the wife of one of them. I was able to save a lot of money.

Father Eleven describes the ways in which his family became involved in his journey:

The baby was coming in a few months and we had to ask my parents to let us live with them again. This time was different. I don't know what happened but my mother and girlfriend started to get along together, helping each other, things like that. I think it had to do with our baby coming. It's been 6 years now. I moved to Indiana because my brother and I talked about bringing our parents with us here.

Father Twelve recalls how his parents regarded his wife and how supportive they were:

They always helped us in any way they could, big or small things, money, advice, good words for us... They loved my wife from the first day they met her. My wife stopped working for a month after we had our daughter. Then my mother and her mother would watch the baby while we were working.

Father Thirteen states that in addition to having had the support from his priest, his cousin played a significant role by helping him cross the border:

My cousin arranged for me to meet with a coyote in Matamoros who got me some papers to cross and then get on the bus to Tampa. Once I got to Brownsville, I called my cousin and got on another bus to Tampa.

Father Fourteen describes how a friendship survives and expands to include their families:

I was coming to Indiana because the guy I was traveling with had family here. We had no idea how to get from Dallas to Indianapolis until he made a few phone calls to his relatives here and they gave us directions, as they had arranged before. Then we traveled by bus to Indianapolis and met my friend's family. Our families are still friends, very close, after all these years.

Father Fifteen, who had been in prison for a few years before crossing the border, recalls the support he received from his wife's parents and a long-lasting friendship, the fruit of a shared experience:

Her parents were very understanding of our situation. From the beginning, I told them that my plan was to cross and stay here. I didn't want to come here, stay away from them for a few months or years, send money, and then one day go back to Mexico.

I came here with another guy from Guadalajara. He had a brother living here for many years who had always been telling him to move here; that things were fine here. So, in about two months or so I planned the trip with my friend. We're still friends today. We have many stories together.

Familism refers to a common cultural value assumed to be shared by the different Hispanic/Latino groups; that is, of course, considering national and regional variations. It is perceived as the salient role played by the family in the life of the individual, and the high reliance upon the family to provide both practical and emotional support (Losada, Robinson Shurgot, Knight, Márquez, Montorio, Izal, & Ruiz, 2006). These fathers' accounts display an abundance of familial support from the moment they entertain the possibility of migrating. Yet, in the preceding stories, familism is seen also as a thread that holds these individuals together; especially, fathers and their own parents, their wives, and their in-laws across the border, between two countries.

New relationships are also formed along the way. They survive and endure to comprise a type of transnational kinship. This concept is similar to what Baldassar, Vellekoop, and Wilding (2007) refer to as *transnational carers*, "people who live across and care across borders" (p. 3). As the authors contend, just as with all types of caregiving, transnational caregiving may at times prove challenging. The ability to provide care transnationally is contingent upon the constraints of time, stage in the family life cycle, health, competing care and work obligations, and cultural preferences and expectations.

Third theme: El sacrificio máximo – The ultimate sacrifice.

For many undocumented immigrants, crossing the border is often a life-threatening experience. The deaths of immigrants crossing along the Mexico – U.S. border have been vastly documented in recent years (Annerino, 1999; Lyon Johnson, 2004; Martinez, 2001; Migration News, 2001). In fact, Annerino identifies the most reported dangers in crossing the border: not listed in order of importance or degree of

frequency: beatings, robbery, and murder; drowning, thirst, shootings, and suffocation.

The fathers in this sample are no exception. For reasons assumed to be related to anonymity and safety, not all fathers interviewed chose to describe their crossing.

Among those who dwelled on that memory during the interview, several described near-death and other experiences that resemble battlegrounds. Some of them get lost as they traverse the desert or fields along the border but successfully crossed to the U.S. side amidst exhaustion and perplexity after having wandered without knowing exactly where they were. Crossing the border ushers also the onset of grief, as separation from loved ones and loss of social supports become real.

Father One does not describe his crossing at all; however, he shares details about his family's crossing, which suggest the likelihood that risk was involved. Referring to his wife and two children, he says:

They all came by plane. The flight made a stop in Phoenix and then they arrived here but they had spent a few days with unknown persons.

The physical and emotional demands posed by the journey are well-articulated by

Father Two when he states:

I crossed the border with two other men. Crossing the border took me about 90 days. I lost almost 20 pounds in 90 days. It was hard. We didn't have much to eat or fresh water to drink. I never imagined it would be that bad, so bad and so hard that it made me regret to have made that decision. I missed my family and cried sometimes, wondering why I was doing that.

Father Three describes his experience crossing the border, which evokes images of a battlefield and feelings of uncertainty as to whether he would see his children again:

It took me one week to cross the border. It seemed longer than that. I walked day and night. I was afraid of getting caught. A helicopter was flying all night, looking for people crossing. I remember one night, running as fast I could, stumbling into other people, confused, disoriented, there were people screaming. I wondered many times whether I'd see my sons again.

Father Four describes a similar experience of survival in which after wandering aimlessly, he learns that he was successful:

It took me 15 days. First, I crossed with a group of people but the police intercepted us at night. We all ran in different directions. I got lost. There were helicopters flying above us. I hid under a bush and closed my eyes because I knew that the reflection of the eyes with the light could help them find me. I started to walk around at night, alone. At dawn, I was still walking. I found myself in a small town. I realized then that I had crossed the border.

Father Six regards crossing the border as a grueling journey:

Crossing was an ugly experience, a painful experience; the worst of all was having to separate from my family. It took me eight days to get to the border. Then, it took me 15 days to cross. I was caught four times. One time, when I was caught, I was locked up for two hours. Then, they let me go and sent me back. The police treated me fine but the coyotes were cruel. They only cared about my money, nothing else. While I tried to cross these few times, it rained all night, every night. I remember that the third time I tried, there were 23 persons in the van that was crossing us. We were cramped in the van, dirty, tired, sleeping, and scared. We were stopped by the police on the highway. We were sent back again. The last time, I was caught in the fields at night. Each time they caught me, they'd take photos and fingerprints. One night, we got locked up by the coyotes for two days without food, water, or any words about where we were, while we were getting ready to cross. I was so scared that sometimes I regretted having left my family.

Father Seven tells a similar experience:

It took my friend and I 11 days to cross, one day to the border and then about ten days to cross to this side. We were fine walking and hiding, we didn't get much sleep, but the coyotes were not good people and didn't treat as well. If you fall and get hurt, they don't care, they don't stop for you. I saw how they treated us and how they didn't care about other people. They didn't care if it was a woman or a child. They just didn't care. We were young and strong. So, we were fine. But there were people who were scared around me. I was scared too, not only of getting caught but also of getting killed somehow and leaving my family alone. There were people being yelled at, ignored and scared by the coyotes. Some people were staying behind. Some people got hurt. I saw mothers crying and carrying their children.

Father Eight describes an experience that was not appraised as life-threatening for him but that triggered worries about his loved ones:

My uncle left some money with my wife, as he had promised, so I knew they would be fine until I got here and started sending some money to them. I was worried and afraid that something terrible could happen to them while I was away. I was afraid that I could get very sick or die while crossing or in the U.S. and leaving them alone. The drive was long, even through Mexico. I had never been so far away from my home.

Father Nine's recollection of his crossing includes also feelings of loss, grief, and fear.

He also learned from one of the guides that he was successful in crossing, which speaks about the vulnerable situation in which he was:

I was very far away from home. I wanted to be home with my wife and daughter. I was imagining how they were. I missed them so much that night. I suppose that kept me going and kept me alive. It was a long walk. They were long days with people getting lost, children crying, some people staying behind especially at night. We had to be very quiet. One night, a helicopter flew all over the border. It was coming and going and we had to hide in ditches, under bushes, and close our eyes. Finally, we got to a big wide paved road where no cars were passing by. There, the coyote told us we had crossed.

The courage and determination displayed by these fathers are undeniable. It is successfully illustrated by Father Ten when he states:

I got off a bus near the border and walked and walked for hours. I had some idea of where I was going to. When I got to a river, I knew what river that was and I decided to do it. I met more people there, not many, only a few guys. Some people would look at the river and walk away, not wanting to try. That day I crossed the river, hanging onto a rope. I got caught three times. I crossed with two other guys at night, we hung onto the rope and swam a little, and when we got to the other side, the police were waiting for us and sent us back. They shot guns in the air, not at us, but we were scared. They didn't even let us get out of the water so we had to swim back to the other shore. The fourth time we tried was very late at night and had better luck because we didn't get caught.

Father Eleven had already lived in the U.S. before the last time he crossed and settled permanently. He did not dwell on the travel but on his memories of how he felt when he made his decision:

This time, I had more to lose. I used to think that my girlfriend needed me and wondered what would happen to her if something happened to me. On the one hand, I didn't want to be away from her and the baby.

Father Twelve clearly describes the chance he took by embarking upon such a dangerous journey with a guide on whom he needed to rely for survival but who was a complete stranger to him. He also describes his awareness of the anticipation of loss and grief:

It was cold, colder than I expected. It's a dangerous trip, well, not all the time, but many times it is. The day after we started to cross it was very hot and I recall thinking: "Why am I trusting this guy?" I mean: the coyote. "I don't know who that is.

He took my money. He could kill us all right here and no one ever would find out about it.”

Before crossing I began to feel really nervous. Looking back, it didn't have much to do with crossing or putting myself in danger. It had to do more with knowing that I was going to be away from my family, alone, after so many years spent next to my wife, the two of us together.

Father Thirteen describes his crossing, which although did not seem to be life-threatening, proved to be long and exhausting, and filled with loss:

I couldn't bring much with me. I knew it was going to be a long trip. I packed a small bag with a few clothes, my Mexican documents, some food, and boarded a bus. I took the bus overnight so I got there in the morning, ready to cross to Texas. My cousin arranged for me to meet with a coyote who got me some papers to cross. Once I crossed, I called my cousin and boarded another bus to Tampa. I spent a day and a half on that bus. I was so tired that I don't remember getting off the bus. I think I slept most of the time. I don't remember that trip very well. All I can remember is that I kept dreaming about my wife and children.

Father Fourteen's recollection vividly describes the fear of not seeing his wife and children again, while poignantly depicting the likelihood of losing one's life along this journey:

Many thoughts went through my mind; the worst nightmares. One of them was that I was not going to see my family again, my children. About two hours later, we got to a river. I don't know what river that was. It was cold. The air was cold. They made us get in the water, the cold water. The river seemed calm, like a lake, but there were parts where you could feel the current, very strong. Women were walking into the water carrying young children. No one helped them. It was hard. I offered my help but one of the guides didn't let me speak. He hit me with a flashlight and told me to be quiet. It was scarier when the water level got higher and we had no idea what we were stepping on. Two women with babies tripped in the water and sank. They didn't know how to swim. We were trying to grab onto them but the current took them, all of them, and we didn't see them again. They drowned. I hope I'm wrong but I believe that they drowned.

Regardless of the degree of threat posed by crossing, one certain aspect of this experience is the loss of loved ones and the loss of one's home, as far as one's country and culture are concerned.

Father Fifteen describes this loss:

My friend and I left together for the border. We took a few buses and for a couple of days that's what we did, spent all the time on buses trying to reach the border. All we did was sleep although I should have stayed awake to see Mexico for the last time until who knows when. The buses rode through places I had never seen before. So, I didn't get to see much of it. Looking back, I think I just wanted to be done with that part of the trip. It was very sad. It hurt to leave my town, my family, one's land.

The data clearly suggest that, in addition to the fear of losing their lives as they crossed the border, these fathers also experienced other powerful emotions such as sudden loss, grief, and uncertainty. Several of them feared being forgotten by their children. Others feared not ever seeing their children again, either because they could die while crossing or because their children could die when the fathers were away from home. Among those fathers who crossed, there were three fathers whose children had not yet been born; therefore, the fear was that they would never meet their children if they died crossing the border. Even when crossing did not pose a threat to physical well-being as in the case of only a few fathers, crossing is described as a painful experience in the sense that the loss of children and wives happens suddenly, marking the onset of grief. The underlying theme in these descriptions is sacrifice, which takes several shapes. The father sacrifices and – consciously or not – the entire family sacrifices with him.

Monroe (1994) argues that ethical action, including the possibility of self-sacrifice, stems from deep-seated idiosyncratic traits that comprise one's central identity, and that such action is seldom a matter of conscious choice. It is her view that “moral values and moral action evolve out of basic identity rather than from rational calculation, and tend to be discovered and recognized rather than computed and chosen” (Bahr & Bahr, 2001, p. 1253). This view could help explain the reason as to why some fathers come to this decision while many other fathers in similar (or perhaps, worse) situations choose to stay in Mexico. Monroe maintains that certain kinds of ethical action, including much altruistic

behavior, “emanate primarily from one's perception of self in relation to others, a perception that effectively then delineates and sets the domain of choice options an actor perceives as available, both empirically and morally” (p. 224). Monroe's view is congruent with Wilson's (1993) position that sympathy, attachment or affiliation, and perceptions of similarity evoke altruistic behavior. Gilmore (1990) states that one widespread criterion for judging manhood is selfless generosity, to the point of sacrifice. He noticed that selfless generosity is undoubtedly one of the admirable parts of the traditional male code.

Fathers take on this journey to save their children from poverty. A worth-noting aspect of such effort is that these fathers risk virtually everything to save their children without the certainty that they will succeed. In their effort to secure a stable life for their children, first they risk their lives with the possible outcome of their deaths along the way, therefore increasing the chances that their children will remain in poverty. Secondly, they risk their wives and children when they cross the border to join him in the U.S., with the possibility of losing them to others' acts of violence or the natural elements, as these stories show. The irony lies in the fact that these fathers risk that which they most value and try to save: the family.

Fourth theme: Mas allá del proveer – Beyond breadwinning.

The evidence shows that these fathers migrate with the purpose of having the opportunity to be breadwinners because that opportunity is no longer available in Mexico or, when it becomes available is either short-lived or insufficient, or both. Once in the U.S., the opportunity to provide for their families becomes available and they seize it without hesitation. Unanimously throughout the sample, these fathers engage in a cycle comprised of three basic steps: working, saving, and sending. In fact, they accept any job that becomes available. They work as many hours as they possibly can, they save money to be able to bring the rest of the family to the U.S., while at the same time they

send remittances to their wives to adequately care for their children. Despite estimations indicating that remittances to Mexico from the U.S. had decreased in recent years, the Inter-American Development Bank (2008) estimates that \$24 billion were sent to Mexico from the U.S. in 2007. However, as the following descriptions show, fathering efforts extend beyond the nonetheless significant task of providing economic stability and material means. Some compelling examples are described below.

Father Two had left three children in Mexico, ages ten, eleven, and twelve. He recalls:

I was working a lot of hours. I was able to sleep only three hours a night. I was saving as much money as I could so that I could send money to my family and save money to pay a “coyote” to bring them here from Mexico.

A demanding work schedule is described by Father Seven when he states:

I had two jobs and was able to send them money about twice a month. All I did was work. Work all day, every day. I did construction work most of the time, almost all day. Then, I cleaned offices in the evening, about three hours every evening. Then, I’d be ready to go to bed and be up at 4:00 in the morning to go to work again. I had to keep working hard, saving money, getting things for the home so that everyone, especially the girls, would be comfortable and happy to have come such long distance to be with a father they hadn’t seen in a long time.

Father Fifteen’s narrative shows his commitment to his family and his perseverance:

I began working doing all kinds of physical work, mowing lawns all day, working in construction, all those things. Little by little, I began to settle here more and more until I was able to rent a place with my friend, since we both had the same jobs and same schedule. The pay was good, especially back in 1995. Two months after I got here, I started to send money to my wife and children.

The commitment, ongoing sacrifice, and determination observed among these fathers are qualities that must be deeply admired. They display strong motivation and a sense of purpose. These traits are typical of most immigrant families who come to the U.S. and show remarkable strengths, including “healthy, intact families, strong work ethic and aspirations, and for many, a cohesive community of fellow immigrants from the same country of origin” (Shields & Behrman, 2004, p. 5). Most Mexican immigrants are poor and work for little pay, notes Falicov (2005). These fathers’ labor is purposeful, goal-oriented, and ambitious. Work meets the needs to prepare for the family’s arrival

and to sustain the family from abroad. However, work also meets the need to cope with loss, grief, and loneliness all which help the father avoid painful memories and feelings.

Father Five describes how staying busy helped him perceive time as going faster:

Every time I crossed the border to come here I used to get very sad. We were poor but we were very happy. Once I'd start to work in the fields, I'd forget about everything, the hurt, you know? And I would work and work from dawn until dark and, that way, days would go by quickly and I'd be on my way back home to my family again.

Working seemed to be helpful as well for Father Twelve as he describes his feelings of grief:

Working and being so busy kept me distracted, so I wouldn't think so much about my family.

From a strength-based framework, their resolve and ability to stay focused on their work are valuable personal assets. From a stress and coping lens, one might categorize this behavior as avoidance; although of the productive type. It is clear that these fathers are aware of their efforts to avoid feelings of loss, grief, and loneliness – all uncomfortable emotions – by staying true to their goals. Emotion-focused coping behaviors might be withdrawal (Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979), self-blame and wishful thinking (Vitaliano et al., 1985), and emotional avoidance (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), which appears to be the one employed by a few of the participants.

Traditionally, it is believed that although any of these behaviors may alleviate the individual's concerns, they do not help him deal with the underlying stress. In this sample, the father's concern is with survival of the self and his loved ones. It is observed that such a concern takes precedence over his feelings of loss and grief so he continues to stay focused on his task; another example of his sacrifice. The investigator argues that this behavior could also be perceived as spillover. In the family-work literature, spillover is understood as the extent to which participation in one domain (i.e.: work) impacts performance in another domain (i.e.: family) (Grzywacz, Almeida, & McDonald,

2002; Pleck, 1995). In this case, these fathers appear to purposefully engage in spillover as a way to remain focused on work and protect themselves from their own painful feelings. Work serves a double purpose: income and emotional self-regulation.

The dedication that these fathers display is undisputable; however, of particular interest for this study is the quality of the father-child relationship from across the border. The evidence shows that although these fathers perceived themselves as providers or bread-winners, they did much more than providing financial support and material things. In several ways, they maintained a bond with their children by displaying interest about their lives, engaging in discipline, being supportive, and offering advice. This fathering ability and effort are described in the following passages.

Father One's wife and children stayed in Mexico with his in-laws. He would call often to ask about his children:

I used to call and talk on the phone with my in-laws. One day, they told me that my son became sick and then my daughter, which happened several times. My wife and her parents told me that he kept getting sick because I was gone. He missed me and had no way of communicating with me, so I decided to bring my wife and the children with me as soon as possible.

Father Two stayed maintained frequent communication while also supporting the family financially. He states:

I used to call them once or twice a week and send money twice a month.

Father Three, whose family did not have a phone, would call a store nearby and ask that they brought his wife and child to the phone. He recalls:

I would call the store nearby our home. I'd call about once a week and sometimes more. I'd spend about a half an hour talking with my wife and son. I'd ask him how he was doing, he'd tell me about being of help to his mother and I'd say to him "good, my son," and I enjoyed telling him how good he was and how much I missed him. I'd also tell him to be good with his mother and be obedient.

Father Four, whose wife was pregnant at the moment he departed, states:

I'd call my wife almost every other day and once I had some money I began to send money to her and my parents, and also buy things for the baby. We didn't know what we were having, a boy or a girl. So, I'd buy mostly toys and clothes that either a boy

or a girl could play with and wear as a baby. I knew I wasn't going to be with her when our baby was born, and that's exactly what happened.

Before and after he became a legal resident of the U.S., Father Five used to cross back-and-forth for work purposes. He states:

I'd call the kids on the phone. Calling Mexico wasn't so cheap then but I needed to know about my family, to see how they were and what they needed. When I knew they were sick, I'd call two or three times a week. I needed to know about them. I'd miss and worry about them a lot.

Father Six, whose family reunion process took a long time and whose daughter was still in Mexico at the time of the interview, recalls:

I did my best to stay in touch with them as much as I could. In the beginning, it was very difficult because I didn't have much money to call. I have to admit that after talking with them I felt lonelier than I did before I called them. They'd ask me when I was coming back home. They'd ask me to send them toys and games they knew about from TV. My daughters wanted clothes. Sometimes, I would send them what they wanted if I could find it but I would usually send my wife money to buy those things for them.

Father Seven had two daughters at the time he departed. They were one and two years old. He recalls and describes the newness of the experience of parenting and nurturing not only children, but daughters in particular:

I remember calling them two or three times a week, the girls were little but they remembered me and seemed very excited when I called, except when they were tired or not feeling well. Of course, they were little so I did most of the talking, asking questions, telling them that I missed them and loved them.

On a few occasions, I bought dolls for them that I sent with a guy who was crossing back. I remember that buying dolls and toys for them was a new experience for me. I was very happy, very proud, for being able to do that. I remember enjoying it and at the same time wishing that they were with me when I was buying them things.

Father Eight describes his relationship with his six year-old son when the family did not have a phone and he maintained the father-son bond by mail:

I'd write to him about hoping that he was doing fine, that he was a good son to his mother, that he'd be obedient and do well in school also because he was starting first grade at that time. I'd also ask him to take good care of his mother.

Father Eight also recalls the double effect of staying in contact with his son:

When I began to write to him, the distance became more real and so writing to him was both sad and nice at the same time.

Father Nine speaks about his feeling of loss experienced as the result of not having been a part of his daughter's first years of life:

I used to send money to my wife and I'd always ask her "What does the girl need?" I would have liked to be able to go shopping for my daughter with my wife and daughter but that's not how things happened and even if I'll never get that time with my daughter back, I know it was for a very good reason.

Father Ten left five children in Mexico when he crossed to the U.S. He recalls his relationship with his children as follows:

Sometimes, I would ask them about school, friends, their cousins, and things like that. Other times, I would tell them to obey their mother, do well in school, be respectful, pray for the family, for everyone.

Father Eleven's first child was born when he was in the U.S. He describes the difficult situation in which he found himself having to choose between wanting to be with his son and staying in the U.S. supporting the family:

The baby was born two days before the day we expected and I was in California. I wanted to go back to Mexico immediately but I wasn't able to do that. It was far, I didn't want to get caught, I was working and saving money, I just couldn't leave.

I kept working, all day, as much as I could, non-stop ... I knew I was being able to help my girlfriend and my child doing what I was doing here in the farms. It wasn't a comfortable life, not only because of the job but also because of the loneliness.

Father Twelve used to send letters and packages with toys, candy, and other items to his daughter and wife. He would also send money on a weekly basis. He describes his relationship and communication with his daughter who was only two years old when he left:

Once we got a phone, I'd call every week, sometimes twice a week. My daughter and I would spend most of the time talking. She would tell me everything about her grandparents, cousins, the dog, her mother, her favorite meals... I just enjoyed listening to her. I'd tell her that she had to be a good girl and be obedient to her mother and grandparents. I never wanted to hang up.

Father Thirteen had two sons, ages six and eight, when he left Mexico. He spent two years away from them. He states:

After I got my first paycheck from the factory, I sent them the first \$100 and it felt good. It felt so good to be able to see that what I had come here to do was possible.

I would call home and talk to the boys every week, sometimes twice a week. They were happy conversations. The boys were asking so many questions: Where are we going to live? What's the house like? They had questions about television, toys, and all kinds of things.

Father Fourteen left three children in Mexico; two daughters, ages six and eight, and one son, age seven. He spent two years away from them. He recalls:

Only my older daughter went to school then, so I'd ask her about school and how much she liked it. I'd tell her that she had to be good, learn a lot, and would tease her by telling her that she was going to grow up to become a doctor.

I'd send money home every two weeks so they all were comfortable and had what they needed. I would send presents on their birthdays and on the day of the Three Wise Men, when all children receive presents. Most of all, I wanted to stay in touch with them.

Father Fifteen had two children when he left Mexico -- a five-year-old daughter and a two-year-old son. He remembers caring for and staying in contact with his children:

I'd call them as much as I could and send money to my wife and her parents to buy the children what they needed. I would find out from my wife what they liked and I'd send it for their birthdays, Christmas, or the Three Wise Men's day, or any time I wanted to send them anything. On the phone, I'd tell them that I missed them and to be obedient with their mother and grandparents.

These passages comprise a powerful testimony to the fact that, in addition to meeting the basic needs of their families and children, these fathers also engage in efforts to maintain and deepen the bond with their children by means of listening; being thoughtful, curious, and playful; and engaging in discipline as they provide supportive comments, praise, and advice. This is consistent with the seemingly contradicting views of Toth and Xu (1999) who contend that these fathers place high value on obedience and compliance with family roles, and the views of Coltrane and Valdez (1993) who found that Latino fathers who hold nontraditional gender roles tend to be more involved

with their children. The views are anything but polar opposites. It is safe to argue that these traits need not be rigid or static and that similar patterns are found among other ethnic groups. Instead of challenging the historic dichotomous nature of the Anglo-Mexican polarity, perhaps, it is now appropriate to reemphasize the need to observe fatherhood from a person-in-situation lens.

Further, these behaviors are congruent with the ethnographic study completed by Baldassar, Vellekoop Baldock, and Wilding (2007) exploring the experiences of migrants and refugees in Australia and their practices of transnational caregiving of parents in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and New Zealand. Precisely, the authors identify the following means of care through their sample: frequent telephone contacts, letters, remembering family holidays, and sending gifts and cards. Consistent with Mirandé (1997), these descriptions illustrating fathers' efforts to ask, listen, encourage, and discipline, are stern challenges to the stereotypical views of Latino fathers in general as aloof or uninvolved. In fact, according to Parke, Coltrane, Borthwick-Duffy, Powers, Adams, Fabricius, Braver, & Saenz (2004), "Latino fathers resemble European- and African-American fathers to a striking degree" (p. 24). Further, they contend that most studies of family work including Latinos show similar patterns of association among variables whether the participants were Latino or Anglo.

In terms of labor, as stated before, their efforts are purposeful. Their work ethic is strong and goal-oriented. It is clearly observed through the sample that their work pattern is consistent and that their goals are to support their families financially, and also prepare for their travel and reunion in the U.S. This preparation for family reunion manifests in the form of asking about and looking for resources to be utilized by their children as they settle in the new country. This is a crucial moment in these fathers' journey, as two significant challenges are taking place at once: while they struggle to settle in a new environment, they experience the fear of not being recognized or being

forgotten by their child. They fear and anticipate being unknown to their own children as a result of the separation. The feelings of loss and fear are dealt with by exerting a great deal of effort at work, working long hours. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, employment fulfills two purposes: (1) to bring income and (2) to deal with or learn to live with painful feelings, as opposed to avoiding them. For the fathers, talking with their children produces feelings of closeness but also the acceptance of the distance between them and the passing of time. It is not surprisingly then that two fathers in the sample developed unhealthy coping skills, namely excessive alcohol use, to deal with feelings of loss and grief.

Fifth theme: Nunca más – Never again.

A significant theme appearing in the data is the father's awareness of having put himself and then his family in harm's way, especially the children. There is also evidence to suggest that he is aware of the likely consequences that his decisions might have had on his relationship with his children. The father's appreciation and celebration for having reunited successfully in the host country go hand-in-hand with the vow that he would never do that again. The descriptions evoke feelings of guilt for having exposed his loved ones to danger, but also relief and satisfaction for having been able to reunite safely. The following passages are testimony to this sentiment that is often stated as a pronouncement: I don't want to do that again.

Father One's wife and children flew in from Mexico. Father One recalls that the flight made a stop in Phoenix and then the family arrived safely after spending a few days with unknown persons. As he describes the moment he reunited with his children in the U.S., Father One's eyes swell. He states:

I feel that we made a good decision by coming here but at the same time I feel that I would never do that again. It was a good idea because they arrived safely and that they met me here but I don't want to do that again. I recall that when I went to pick them up at the airport, our daughter was being carried by another person and she didn't seem to recognize me at first.

Father Two, whose family reunited with him 14 months after he departed from Mexico, displays awareness of the fact that his children did not want to come to the U.S. He recalls:

My children did not want to come. They wanted to stay in Mexico. They wanted me to go back home. I realized that I would have not been able to sustain them the same way if I had stayed there. But how could they know that? I don't want to go through all that again. I have to say that today I feel old, older, that I have aged so much in nine years.

Father Three recalls the thought that went through his mind when he was crossing the border:

Looking back, I think I'd never do it again without knowing whether I'd see them again. While I was crossing, I wondered many times whether I'd see them again.

Father Four, who came to the U.S. without the intention of settling permanently but only for a few months so that he could help his family, recalls:

I didn't want to leave my wife and baby. That was the hardest thing that I ever had to do but I had a good opportunity in front of me. My wife and son didn't cross the way I did. They crossed with a woman in her car, through another border post. They didn't have to run as I did. I still was worried about them. I was worried for all those days.

As he describes the moments preceding his departure, Father Six recalls how he felt about his four children, ages thirteen, eleven, eight, and five:

I don't think they understood what was happening but I understood and it was hard for me to leave them, so little, so innocent. How could I explain to them what I was about to do?

Father Seven's wife and two daughters traveled by bus to Ciudad Juarez, a place notorious for the kidnapping, rape, and murder of females. From that location, his wife and daughters were driven across the border by a person who provides such service. He states:

Looking back, I can't believe I trusted a stranger with my daughters. I don't think I'd do it again. I couldn't do it again. I was lucky, my family was lucky. Nothing bad happened.

Father Nine, whose wife was pregnant at the time he left, describes his awareness of not having had the opportunity to be with his daughter during the first year of her life and meeting her for the first time when she was about one year old:

I thank God for how well we are, but there is always a part of me in my head telling me that I will never get that year back.

Father Ten's family's crossing to the U.S. proved to be challenging. He arranged for his family to cross through a different route. He recalls that his family still had to cross afoot, walk day and night, and sleep on the ground. He states:

Every time I think of my children sleeping on the ground, my stomach turns upside down and I feel so guilty.

Furthermore, he describes how close he came to losing his eight year-old daughter:

My oldest daughter got lost for a whole day after the group was caught and chased after by the police. She separated from my wife when they were running but she was with other families and children so they found each other later. When my wife told me that, a few days after they got here, I locked myself in the bathroom and cried and prayed that God would forgive me.

Father Eleven recalls that one day he said to his girlfriend that he wanted her and their one- year-old son to cross, and join him permanently. He arranged for a woman he knew to transport them across the border. They joined him in California almost two months after he proposed the idea to his girlfriend. Father Eleven emphatically states:

The woman who crossed them called me from this side of the border when they were fine. I do not want to relive that again.

Father Twelve and his wife had planned this experience for many years, since they were in high school. He recalls that his wife and his three-year-old daughter crossed the border with a group of people, strangers. He recalls that he paid a lot of money to a coyote to cross them safely. Knowing from his own experience about the perils of such travel he was aware of his helplessness as they were crossing. He states:

Crossing the border and then imagining my wife and daughter crossing was what I will remember forever, the feeling of not being able to do anything but only have faith and trust that what we planned for so long was going to work out.

The high number of deaths on the Mexican – U.S. border is not a new phenomenon. It is believed that approximately 3,000 individuals died while trying to cross the border in the last decade (Cooper, 2004). Father Fourteen states that he would never be able to erase from his mind the image of two women with children getting lost in the river and possibly drowning when they all crossed a river near the border. He further explains that he would never be able to let go of the image of his wife crossing and carrying their youngest daughter, who was eight years old at that time, with the other two children holding onto her. He explains:

I could have lost my entire family in one night. Suddenly, it became a huge risk and I was afraid, terrified, of going ahead with my plan.

Father Fifteen describes his awareness of the current sociopolitical climate in the U.S., less hospitable toward immigrants than he had anticipated. He explains the fear in which he and his family live nowadays:

For me, sometimes living here feels like when I first came, when I had to hide and be careful about who I talked with and what I said. I never wanted for my family to have to feel scared when living in a free country. I guess that for so many people we're not really free, not free to be here.

This fear is not unfounded. As discussed in Chapter Two, raids and deportations have increased significantly in the last few years (Preston 2007; Segal & Mayadas, 2005, Vitello, 2006). On May 18, 2008, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security carried out a raid on the Agriprocessors plant in Postville, Iowa. Almost 400 immigrants were arrested. It was the Bush administration's largest crackdown on undocumented workers at a single site (Hsu, 2008). Half of the school system's 600 students were absent the following day, including 90% of Latino children, because their parents were arrested or in hiding. Hsu reports that there was evidence indicating that 76% of the 968 employees on the company's payroll over the last three months of 2007 used false or suspect Social Security numbers. An affidavit by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) states that the company employed 15-year-olds, helped cash checks for workers

with fake documents, and pressured undocumented workers to purchase vehicles and register them in other names. This incident is an example of the helpless situation in which undocumented Mexican immigrants find themselves. Opportunity is seldom offered without exploitation.

For other fathers, *nunca más* has to do with not wanting to experience other painful events in their lives, such as poverty and helplessness in Mexico. Father Eight explains:

I felt as if I were in a cage, like a caged animal, paralyzed, with no way out, not being able to do anything to change our situation. The worst part was my knowing that I was not able to offer my son anything better. It was a day I'll never forget. I don't even want to talk about that today. We were poor, so poor that my wife cried in desperation sometimes, I didn't know what to do.

Similarly, Father Thirteen recalls the poverty that he, his wife, and their two sons, ages six and eight years, endured in Mexico:

I think I'll never be able to forget how trapped I used to feel when I was in Mexico, trying to survive to help my family, my boys survive too. That was a bitter time in my life.

The father's vow to never again make the same choices that put his children at risk is a loud theme that emerges in the data. During interviews, it was clear that several fathers had entertained the possible consequences that their decisions might have had on his children's safety and his relationship with his children. As mentioned before, this prowess is not carried out without sacrifice. It does not manifest without the father's guilt either. Overwhelming guilt is a normal response among immigrants who have had to leave loved ones in their home countries. Across the sample, it is evident that guilt is the feeling that claims *nunca más*.

Among several immigrant groups, many parents report having had doubts about their decision to migrate and guilt for leaving their families (Bemak & Chung, 2008). Feelings of loss and grief, and often guilt, resulting from having left their children in Mexico may be devastating. Further, these emotions may be compounded by the

intense fear the father experienced if the family's efforts to reunite in the U.S. involved some degree of risk. Several fathers in the sample indicate that they enjoyed a close relationship with their children before departure. It is understandable that suddenly severing the attachment with their children would create a myriad of powerful feelings, more so when father and child enjoyed a good relationship with each other. Several fathers report that they had good relationships with their children prior to leaving for the U.S. They played with them and often engaged in activities usually associated with mothering.

This is consistent with Gutmann's (1996) observations in urban Mexico where he saw fathers carrying infants and toddlers in public places, spending time in direct care with them, and taking their children to the workplace and introducing them to coworkers. A study by López and Hamilton's (1997) exploring Mexican women's recollections of their fathers indicated that they remembered their fathers, uncles, and grandfathers as having been more involved with play activities than the female caregivers they had as children. During his trips to Mexico, the investigator also observed similar nurturing behaviors, such as fathers pushing strollers and playing with their children in parks.

The manner with which an individual's decision to migrate and settle in another country is received by his family is revealing of their negotiated family commitments. How parents and sibling react to a father's decision to migrate can have profound effects on the way they feel about each other and their expectations to give and receive care. In cases in which the decision to migrate has not been well received by family members, resentment toward the immigrant is apparent on the part of the spouse, children, and relatives, who might feel that the immigrant, by leaving, has relinquished his caregiving responsibilities (Baldassar, Baldock, & Wilding, 2007). In this sample, resentment and fear are observed among their wives rather than their children.

After having put themselves and their families through extremely dangerous situations when they migrate to the U.S., and after having experienced paralyzing poverty and helplessness in Mexico, these fathers recognize and vow that neither experience is to be re-lived again. Once the family settles in the new country, hope is experienced but this transition also brings a host of challenges and unknown scarcities.

Sixth theme: La otra pobreza – The other poverty.

Family reunion is a time of celebration. Resettlement is a stage in which significant changes occur, such as the onset of acculturation, often resulting in acculturative stress and other challenges in adaptation (Marsella & Yamada, 2000). Family resettlement is a time of possibility and new opportunities but it does not come without a price as it often imposes a demanding task (Rogler, Cortes, & Malgady, 1991). Past the hurdles of adaptation, family integration poses other obstacles as family members begin to gradually integrate into the large community. This is observed as both parents seek and secure employment, children enroll in school and also extracurricular activities, the family attends church, or the parents participate in diverse activities. The abundance of opportunity is often accompanied by a dearth of time spent together as a family. Further, the faster pace of life in U.S. society and the impending fear of being deported contribute to a perception that living in the U.S. is not as satisfying as they imagined. These challenges are clearly depicted in the descriptions that follow.

Father One recalls that in Mexico, although the children were very young, he used to spend a lot of time with them. He explains that he was not the type of father who would not want to be home with the children. Although he would like to be able to spend more time with his ten- year-old son and eight-year-old daughter, he recognizes that the family business demands a great deal of attention:

Soon after my wife and children came, we each got two jobs and we didn't have much time for our children. Before we had the restaurant, we had more time to help out at the school and meet other parents. Right now our problem is this restaurant

which demands full time attention from us and we don't have as much time with the children as we used to.

Father Two has a twenty-one year-old son and two daughters, ages twenty and nineteen years. He discusses the family's lack of time to be together due to several commitments:

I try to spend as much time as possible with them. We're all busy, you know? I work a lot of hours sometimes. They have their own obligations, school and work, and sometimes they have other things to do. The time we have together isn't that much.

The saying "everything is greener on the other side" might be what Father Three implies when he states:

Once you make a better living here, you tend to think that everything was really bad back home but it wasn't all the time. I loved seeing my son grow up. I loved teaching him things. We had money problems but we had more time.

Father Three has a twelve-year-old son who was only four when he departed. In the next passage, this father's comment evokes the feeling of regret:

Sometimes I feel as if I didn't make a good choice by coming here. Life is more tranquil in Mexico; one has his family, his neighborhood.

Father Four acknowledges that his only reason to migrate to the U.S. was to be able to support his family, including his son who had not been born at the time he left. He is very clear about his intention to not reside permanently in the U.S.:

I don't think I would have come here to live if I were still single. I don't think I would have felt the responsibility to come here. Life is nice in Mexico. It's one's home, you know? I don't have much here. I have a truck and rent a trailer home, we live in a trailer home. I never wanted to buy a home here because I knew I was going to get back. I think I would like to go back.

Father Five is in his late fifties. He is a legal resident of the U.S. because his mother was a U.S. citizen. After several decades of living in the U.S. he has not been able to learn English and so he continues to do farming work. On the one hand, he enjoys that work. On the other, it is the only type of work he knows how to perform well:

I often wonder for how long I will be able to keep doing this job. It gets harder and harder as years go by: my back, my bones hurt. I don't get any help from the government. I don't want to do that. I never did. But now, the only thing I ask for is food stamps because I don't make enough money. But I only ask for two or three months, not more than that.

The lack of time to be spent as a family is also acknowledged and described by Father Six who has two sons, ages twenty-one and sixteen years, and two daughters, ages eighteen and thirteen. His youngest daughter is still in Mexico and does not want to come to the U.S. Father Six explains:

I think we all had to grow so quickly, so much in the last four years, not only they did but I did too. Life is not bad here. It is harder than I had imagined it. Of course, it was hard in Mexico but, at least, in Mexico, even if we were struggling, I was more able to spend time with my family.

Father Seven has two daughters, ages seven and eight. He appraises the overall family experience as a positive one, as indicated in the next passage:

I think everything is fine, we're fine. The girls are growing well, they're in school, they speak English well, my wife and I don't speak well yet but we know how to get by.

However, he is aware of the vulnerability of his stability due to sudden changes in the U.S. in the last few years as a result of the anti-immigration climate, especially against Mexicans, and the looming possibility of facing deportation.

Sometimes I worry about my job. I had good luck to have kept the same job all these years but things are changing now, for everyone, I know that some people are being deported now.

Father Eight has a seventeen-year-old son of whom he is very proud. His son does not want to return to Mexico, but Father Eight and his wife do hope to go back some day. He states:

I wish I didn't have to leave them. If I didn't have to come here to make things better for my family, I would have stayed in Mexico because we were poor but life is not bad there if you have enough to live.

He also acknowledges the difficulty with adjustment that his wife still experiences and their fear of being arrested and deported. This is apparent in the following statement:

She doesn't understand or speak English. We're afraid of going out and being asked for documents by the police.

Very eloquently, Father Nine describes how family members' responsibilities interfere with the family's ability to spend time together:

There's no time for family in this country and the saddest thing is that there's not much time for us to be together. I work all day. I have a store with other guys. I work all weekend too. My wife doesn't have to work but she takes care of the girls all the time. My older daughter does sports too. She has school and homework to do. We rarely eat together at the same time.

Father Ten has five children; three daughters, ages seventeen, sixteen, and fifteen; and two sons, ages fourteen and thirteen. He recognizes that he and his wife are often surprised about how much they like living in the U.S. but he also acknowledges differences between both countries and makes the following comparison:

Living here is not like living in Mexico and one knows the difference. One is busy all the time here. I know it's worthwhile but one has to let go of a lot of things that are important like family, time with the family, all you do in this country is work and work all the time, and the family, which is supposed to come first many times comes last. It's different. Sometimes, it feels like this country takes away more than it gives.

Father Eleven has three children -- a five-year-old son born in Mexico; and a two-year-old son and a six-month-old daughter both born in the U.S. This father is deeply concerned with the situation he created by having children in the U.S. and the anticipation of conflict as his Mexican-born child will not qualify for the same rights and benefits that his two U.S.-born children are eligible for. He states:

This is a tough time for immigrants and our children. When I made the decision to cross, years ago, and then bring my family with me later, I was only thinking about how we could have a decent life, without hurting anyone, without losing each other.

Father Twelve has an eleven-year-old daughter with whom he cannot spend much time together. His comment provides a powerful metaphor, that of being eaten by the many responsibilities that must be performed and the lack of time and also energy to spend with one another in the U.S.:

I work all day. My wife works a lot too. My daughter is in school and after-school care. We see one another late in the day, sometimes very late, when we're tired. Life seems to go very fast, faster than it seemed to go in Mexico. There is no time to be with the family, unless one goes to church, or late at night watching TV together. In Mexico, there's time for family, big families, lots of friends, and time to hang out with them. Here, you have to have two jobs, your wife has to work too, everybody is busy, and then everybody is tired, too tired to hang out. It is as if this country engulfs you, eats you whole.

Father Thirteen has two sons, ages fifteen and seventeen. Not unlike the majority of the children mentioned in this study, his sons remain undocumented, a situation which prevents them not only from having rights but also from traveling back and forth to Mexico and visiting their relatives. Father Thirteen says:

My mother still lives there, near Puebla. I talk to her once a week and help her also by sending her some money, not much, whatever I can. She asked about the boys. Sometimes we all fantasize with the idea of going there for a visit but that is not a possibility for now and who knows for how long.

Father Fourteen has two daughters, ages twelve and fifteen years, and a son who is fourteen years old. He is proud of his children and their accomplishments. He also describes in detail the difficulty with spending time together as a family presented by a busy schedule, which is a new experience for the family:

If there was one thing I could change about living here, it would be that we had more time together as a family. Although there are more opportunities and peace here, there's less time to be spent together as a family. Time seems to go by so quickly, the children are so tall and grow so fast, and learn so much so quickly. We're always rushing. That's new for us.

Father Fifteen has two children, a fourteen-year-old son and a seventeen-year-old daughter. When he was still in Mexico, unable to find stable employment and his wife was the breadwinner, he used to spend a considerable amount of time with his children. In the U.S., his family life is far different:

It certainly is harder to live here than I imagined before I came. I am grateful for living here but it's not an easy life style. People are always busy, running, in a hurry; there's no time. It always feels that no matter how hard you try to have a special and simple time with your family or your wife, something needs to be done that usually seems to be more important than family. There's something missing here.

The preceding descriptions demonstrate that although these fathers have succeeded at reuniting and settling with their families in the U.S., other unanticipated challenges affect the family, to such extent that the quality of life is perceived as less enjoyable than it was in Mexico or more unpleasant than it was imagined before departure. Not unlike immigrants from other parts of the world, Mexican immigrant

families face several types of adjustment problems related to economic and employment factors; difficulties related to language, communication, and a lack of basic understanding of the way of life in the new society; and everyday factors that affect family relations and their participation in the social environment (Ben-Sira, 1997).

This is not surprising; paradoxically, parenthood implies devoting time and energy for certain activities vital for the family at the expense of the family. Knoester and Eggebeen (2006) note that fatherhood encourages men to increase intergenerational and extended family interactions, participation in service-oriented activities, and hours in paid labor—at the expense of spending time engaged in leisure and social activities. Fathers in this sample regard family time as being sacrificed by all family members in order to fulfill other essential roles and responsibilities valued by the family, namely: parent, employee, breadwinner, student, and athlete, to name a few.

For the most part, first generation working class Mexican families appear to successfully negotiate changes without any major crisis; however, some families have more difficulty. Tensions in the marital relationship may emerge as financial need compels the wife who has never been employed to join the workforce (Falicov, 1998). It is not unusual for newly arrived Mexican parents to have to face charges of neglect as a result of their lack of understanding of U.S. child protection laws. Newly arrived Mexican parents may “leave children unattended in cars, put babies on laps while riding in the car, leave small children at home in the care of a preteen sibling, or fail to have children immunized” (Hancock, 2005, p. 698). Children display many strengths; one of them being their ability to learn English quickly. However, besides acting as translators for their parents, children may also have the responsibility of caring for younger siblings and perform some housekeeping and cooking (Orellana, 2003).

Without English language proficiency and education, becoming a citizen does not imply the end of financial worries, as observed in Father Five. The incongruence

between what was imagined about the U.S. before immigrating and what is real is apparent throughout the sample. This is a new type of incongruence, far different from the one experienced in Mexico when the father contemplated the idea of migration. It is safe to argue that most fathers anticipated living with the fear of being discovered, arrested, and possibly deported. However, none of them seemed to foresee the impact of the U.S. fast pace of life on family relationships. Despite relative economic stability and their children's educational achievements, all these losses speak of a general disillusionment and discontent with life in the U.S. They speak of a new kind of poverty, the sacrifice of human relationships also compounded by their inability to see, touch, hold, and share with their loved ones in Mexico because travel across the border is not a safe option. The endless relationship with the border is further discussed in the next theme as a new type of border is evoked by their descriptions.

Seventh theme: La frontera adentro – The border inside.

It is possible to consider that once the father and his family have crossed the border to the U.S., to them, the border lies behind as a territory; a far-and-away land not to be treaded again at least in the perilous way it was traversed to come here and start a new life. However, the following accounts evoke the presence of a border, an invisible divide, elicited by the hypervigilance these fathers experience as they fear deportation, and by the disparity in eligibility and civic participation their children will experience as a result of having different immigration status. Further, fathers acknowledge also that their children cannot continue their education beyond high school as they do not qualify for financial aid for college.

As he recognizes his fear of being found by the police and being deported, Father One recalls how he felt about his children as he acknowledged that they were vulnerable to the same fate. He states:

I thought about how my children were going to have to live here. I wonder if they were going to have to feel that they had to hide as if they were criminals. I wonder if I really wanted to put my kids through that.

Thinking about his children's wishes for higher education, Father Two says:

I know that my children are not able to go to college in the U.S. That worries me. One of my children wants to go back to Mexico so that he can go to college there. I think it would be a good idea because I would be able to help him from here.

On another subject, the possibility of arrest and deportation, Father Two discusses his fears and his intent to protect his children by avoiding the subject:

I fear that we could be deported, I myself, my wife, the children ...So, I try not to talk about immigration and laws with my children. I don't want to burden them with all that because there's nothing they can do about it.

Father Three performs farming work which is seasonal. To him, the border is not simply a memory but a way of life, a door of opportunity for stable income. He states:

I work in the fields and when there's no work here because of the weather, I have to go back to Mexico to work in the fields there. There's always work in Indiana in the spring and summer, maybe in the end of the summer.

He also mentions the new reality he is aware of and the fear he must live with:

Now there are raids going on, I have heard that the police show up asking for documents.

Father Four's wife travels back-and-forth between Mexico and the U.S. Although he is not the one crossing the border, her travel brings the border closer to home. He states:

She's usually gone for two or three weeks. As soon as she crosses back, she calls me to let me know she's fine. She crosses with people she knows and trusts. Once I know she's fine in Mexico or when she's crossed back, I'm fine too. But, when I know she's crossing, I worry all the time, I don't sleep, I think about the worst things happening to her, I think about our son and what would be like for him if she didn't come back one day.

As mentioned before, 56-year-old Father Five does not speak English. That barrier coupled with his age and the fact that he does not have a formal education put him at a

disadvantage to apply for better jobs despite the fact that he is a U.S. citizen. For him, his lack of opportunity keeps him constantly crossing the border. Father Five says:

Worrying is something that has not changed in all these years. You would think that because I have papers I don't have to worry about money or having a job but, as I told you before I don't speak English and the only thing I know how to do is work in the farms. Sometimes, what worries me is when work is slow and there isn't much to do, so I don't make enough money.

For Father Six, the crossing has not ended. He still has a 13-year-old daughter in Mexico who does not wish to move to the U.S. Due to the slow rate of family reunion, the border has been and still is a constant presence in his family. Father Six states:

We're still getting back together. It has taken us a long time to feel like a family again. I was able to bring my oldest son and daughter only seven months ago. Then, only about three months ago, I brought my youngest son.

Similar to several other fathers, Father Six mentions the present danger of facing deportation and the inescapable reality of having to adjust his way of life to remain safe:

We don't go out. I don't drive around. I only drive to work and back home. We don't want to get caught. There are raids now, more raids.

Father Seven articulates his appreciation for having had some stability ever since he arrived but also acknowledges the new sense of vulnerability:

Sometimes I worry about my job. I had good luck to have kept the same job all these years but things are changing now, for everyone, I know that some people are being deported.

For Father Eight and his wife, the border exists between the two of them and their son. For now it may be only symbolic but in the future it may become a geographical distance as they have different expectations. When referring to his 17-year-old son, Father Eight states:

I can't believe he's 17 already. He doesn't want to go back to Mexico. My wife sometimes does. I do too.

Father Nine has two daughters, one born in Mexico and the other in the U.S. He articulates the anticipation of differences in advantages that both daughters will experience:

Our youngest daughter was born here, she's a U.S. citizen and I feel good about that because that cannot be taken away from her, and she will have good opportunities. The problem is that she will have more opportunities than her older sister. Right now, I can't imagine what that is going to be like. Two sisters, the same family, but one will have more advantages than the other.

Father Ten describes his long-lasting relationship with the border as a result of having to make payments to a coyote for a long time, which caused economic struggle for the family:

There were times when work was slow and that was a problem for us, especially when I was paying the coyote the money I owed him. We had to go to a few food banks.

Father Eleven is in a situation similar to Father Nine. His oldest child was born in Mexico while the other two children were born in the U.S. He also recognizes the lack of equal opportunity that his son will experience. Father Eleven states:

I'm thinking about my children. Two of them are American and our older son is Mexican. What is going to happen to him? What is he going to feel, think, and say to us?

Father Twelve shares that he and his wife always talk about how much harder than they imagined it is to live in the U.S. His comment evokes some type of nostalgia and grief, a deep sense of not belonging here. Yet he is aware that this is his daughter's world:

I'm here with my family but there's a part of me that still feels alone. This is not my land. I feel it every day. My daughter is fine, she's happy. She grew up here. In a way, that's all she knows.

Similar to other fathers' situations, Father Thirteen foresees his children's realization that they are disadvantaged in several ways by virtue of their immigration status. Referring to his sons, who were only six and eight years of age when they arrived, he states:

When I brought them here, they didn't have a choice. They didn't know about being legal or illegal. They were children. How were they supposed to think about that? My concern is that one day they will resent me or their mother for having put them in such a difficult situation. The other thing that worries me is that they would get in some kind of trouble and they will have them deported.

It would appear that Father Fourteen will never be able to erase from his mind the image of two women presumably drowning as they crossed a border river. Both that image and

the anticipation of his children's struggles as they grow older in the U.S. as a result of their immigration status, brings the border back into his family:

What I think it's ironic is that as I try to run away and save my family from violence and crime in Mexico, that's all I found on my way here, tragedy.

Father Fifteen also expresses feelings of worry as he anticipates that his 14-year-old son and 17-year-old daughter will soon be adults, and they are undocumented. Further, he describes his helplessness about his children's education:

I knew what I was doing when I came here by myself. They didn't. They're finding out now. They are very good students, fully bilingual, motivated, and always got awards in school, but now they can't go further because they can't go to college.

Unlike immigrants from 50 or more years ago, today's immigrants have the opportunity of easy and frequent travel to their home countries, if they can afford to do so both financially and legally. In many cases, an immigrant's experience often spans countries and continents (the U.S. and Mexico, the U.S. and China, etc.), having relatives and family members still residing in their home countries. Therefore, the border is not a line "to be crossed once and for all, but something to be crossed and re-crossed, in the imagination if not always in reality" (Donnan & Wilson, 1999, p. 109). From this vantage point, lives are lived in several locations; locations of the world and those of the soul. The lives of those who immigrate without the proper documents are inevitably fragmented by distance and laws. Yet, they defy the political spaces delineated by governments. Chávez (1991) purports that for undocumented immigrants the passage (crossing) is never completed. For these immigrants, crossing the border without documentation entails to remain trapped, as unincorporated outsiders in American society for whom even returning to Mexico poses many problems.

With the exception of Father Three who still crosses the border back-and-forth for work purposes, and Father Four's wife who does the same, the geographical Mexico-U.S. border was left behind a long time ago for the majority of these fathers.

Nonetheless, symbolically, it still is a part of their lives today. It manifests in the shapes of immigration policy and social inequality, drawing a line between those siblings who by birthright are more advantaged than the others, bringing social inequality within the family. The border is thought of and spoken about by fathers whose children are still reuniting with them in the U.S. and by those fathers whose children intend to go back to Mexico to complete their education. Similarly, the border is considered when fathers accept that this is not their country and that they intend to return to Mexico. The likelihood that their children might choose to stay in the U.S. creates yet another type of border, an emotional one, with their children. The ominous possibility of being arrested and deported elicits fears of disruption and separation from what has become familiar after a few years of resettlement. In sum, because the father anticipates his voluntary return to Mexico, or because he anticipates his children's return to Mexico, or because they might be legally forced to uproot and lose all they consider to be home today, the border lives in their homes and in their minds.

These are powerful emotions elicited by overwhelming realities and also prospects likely to become realities in the near future. Although from the moment of his departure until his family reunites in the U.S., the father experiences many circumstances alone, other aspects of his experience are shared with his wife, the mother of his children. These include life-changing decisions. As Father Two puts it:

I don't think I could be a father without my wife so she has a lot to with my being a father.

The following theme provides insight into the father-mother relationship, and evolving partnership lasting several years with their children's needs at heart.

Eighth theme: De la mano – Hand in hand.

Throughout the sample there are many accounts that describe the father's relationship with his wife. These descriptions are significant in the sense that they relate

to the father's perception of the wife dealing with decisions he made and she came to accept and support, as well as decisions they made together to ensure the stable well-being of their children.

Father One recalls that his decision to migrate and settle in the U.S. was mainly his wife's family's idea. They both agreed on a time for the family to reunite in the U.S. Today, after seven years living here, they continue to work together as mother and father, as evidenced by their joint participation in their children's school and the community. They both share responsibilities in the restaurant they own. Father One states:

She's very supportive of me and, I believe, she and I support each other very much. We make decisions together for our family. Together we can teach our children with our example also, by showing them how to work together with other people, how to be responsible, how to think about the needs of others, how to talk to one another.

It was a different situation for Father Two whose wife was not comfortable with his decision to leave her and their three children, but who after a few years has continued to parent with him side-by-side. He recalls:

It took me a few months to make the decision to cross and another few weeks to have the courage to talk to my wife about it. We talked for a few days, two weeks may be. We finally decided that I was going to come here. Looking back, it looked more like a decision that I made and that she supported or respected.

Father Two further describes his relationship with his wife as it relates to their children:

She's fine. My wife has always had a job ever since she crossed. I don't think I could be a father without her. It's a lot of work, a lot to do, and a lot to worry about. There are things about being a parent at which she is much better than I could ever be.

A similar experience is reported by Father Three when he describes his wife's reaction about his decision to leave her and their four-year-old son.

I knew how she felt about it. She did not want me to leave. She got angry with me every time I tried to talk about it. But later she accepted it. She knew I was serious about this.

Father Three acknowledges during the interview that he was aware that his wife was afraid of being abandoned by him, afraid that he would not follow through with this plan.

While he was in the U.S. alone, he communicated with his wife by phone and after two years he was able to bring his wife and son with him. He and his wife have raised their son together. At age 12, their son is oblivious to the threat of deportation. Father Three states:

Now there are raids going on, I have heard that the police show up asking for documents. There isn't a day when I don't think about that. I don't want my son to have to worry about the raids, so my wife and I never talk about that in his presence.

Father Four's wife was pregnant at the moment he departed. He recalls that his decision was triggered by a sudden increase in obligations he was not able to meet because he did not have opportunities to do so. He describes his wife's response:

I really didn't think that she accepted it but she also saw that we had only a few choices for a better life. We talked about it. After my father talked to her, she was more open about the idea because the plan was for us to be together soon.

Because his son was born while he was in the U.S., he and his wife worked together to ensure that their child would have an awareness of having a father and so she would talk to their son about his father:

My wife and parents would talk to him about me and I also know that they'd tell him that he and his mother were going to come to be with me soon. I'd also send him toys every time I could. He knew the toys came from "papa" because my wife would talk to him about me.

Similar to Father Two's perception of fatherhood, Father Four states:

In some ways, being a father to me means working together with my wife, thinking and talking about our son and figuring out what the best for him is.

Father Five recalls that he and his wife shared the same perception about their family and four children, and their needs and resources. He states:

My wife, back then, and I could have done well in Mexico but we both knew that our children were going to need more than we were able to provide them with. She supported me, she really helped me.

Father Five had to wait in Mexico for about three years to get his green card before returning to the U.S. He recalls how his late wife and he worked together as he waited for his immigration status to change and then be able to return to the U.S.:

Those three years that I stayed in Mexico waiting to get my papers, she had two jobs, cleaning and cooking, and I was working in construction, all those three years waiting until I got my papers so that I could come and go without problems. Looking back, they were good years.

A detailed description of the enduring partnership with his wife through a succession of difficult decisions is provided by Father Six in the following sentences, beginning with his decision to cross due to his inability to meet the family's needs:

She agreed with the idea because she saw how worried and unhappy I was all the time. She knew how desperate I was. Once I had talked with my wife and made the decision to cross, I talked to the children. My wife and I both talked to the children together. That wasn't easy. Our older children had a difficult time accepting that.

After four years in the U.S., both Father Six and his wife continue to make difficult decisions together, as exemplified by the following description in regard to their 13-year-old daughter:

My other daughter does not want to come and, as hard as that is for me to accept, I have to let her do that and stay where she feels safe and comfortable. As much as I love her and miss her, it's also good for me, and my wife, because we don't want to have to worry about another one of our kids having to be defenseless in the middle of nowhere. After all we've been through, that is the biggest sacrifice for us, to not force our daughter to come here.

Father Seven recalls that once in the U.S. he and his wife discussed their feelings about his departure. He states:

She and I talked a lot about why I left and how I left. It took her a long time to accept my decision. We said good-bye in a very cold and sad way.

A joint decision-making process is evident when Father Seven describes how he and his wife discussed the way in which she and their two daughters were going to cross the border and join him. His wife had to separate from their daughters temporarily:

I didn't want anything bad to happen to them. My wife was able to send the girls with a woman who crosses children in her car. We had to arrange it like that.

Father Eight left his wife and six-year-old son when he departed for the U.S. He recalls her response to his decision:

She accepted it with a lot of sadness. She showed more resignation than acceptance, at least during those days before I left. She had to be strong; we both

had to be strong for our son. The day before I left, my wife and I had a long conversation about my decision. She still felt that she didn't want me to come here and leave them alone.

Once reunited in the U.S., he and his wife continued working together to support their son with other challenges when he began going to school, as described in the following passage:

In the beginning, our son was scared. He had to be so overwhelmed. Besides, we hadn't been together for two years. Our son had a hard time in school, but he never repeated a grade. My wife and I had to go to several meetings at the school to figure out how to best help him.

In comparison to the rest of the sample, Father Nine's discussion with this wife about his plan was less problematic. He recalls:

My wife agreed with the idea. From the beginning, I told her that this was a plan for us, for the girl, for our family, and that it was going to be only a matter of time before we got together again in the U.S. She was worried about me but she wasn't afraid that I wasn't going to keep my word.

Once settled in the U.S., Father Nine's wife has taken advantage of several opportunities and is a strong source of support for the father and their two daughters, as shown in the next description:

In addition to what she learned in school and watching TV, my wife has taken some English classes and she can do fine. I can't speak English yet. I work with other Mexican guys and we have mostly Hispanic clients so I don't practice English and I don't have the time to study it. She pays the bills.

Father Ten and his wife had five young children in Mexico when he decided to migrate. He remembers that his worries about their economic situation were so strong that he often felt alone. His wife was aware of his feelings; therefore, he recalls that she did not seem to be surprised by his idea:

I can't say that she was happy or excited. Having so many worries was like living with a constant headache all the time. I can say that she was supportive and agreed with my idea. I know she didn't want me to leave but she knew it was an alternative for us, for our children, so she helped me. She helped me figure out how we were going to tell the children. I had no idea about how to do that.

Father Eleven recalls that he and his girlfriend were living with his parents when he stated his idea of crossing. His girlfriend was pregnant at that time. His description provides examples of their working together:

It was hard for her in the beginning but she accepted it. She was a little scared for me. She understood but she thought that I was crossing only for a few months. That was also my plan until I ended up staying here for good.

One day I said to my girlfriend that I wanted her and our son to come with me and so she did. I sent her more money and she crossed with a woman I knew and they came to California almost two months after we started talking about it. My wife works at a bakery, only in the mornings. I go to work a little late so that I can be with the boys until she comes back.

Unlike any other father in this sample, Father Twelve planned his family's life in the U.S. with his wife when they both were young. He states:

We planned it when we started going out and we were very young. We knew that whenever we had a family, it was going to be very difficult to raise our children and give them what they need. We both come from poor families. They were not able to send us to school after grade school.

As he discusses how busy life in the U.S. is, Father Twelve mentions the effort that he and his wife exert to ensure that their 11-year-old daughter's needs are met:

We both always work very hard. We still make the time to see that our daughter is doing well in school and that she has only good friends. When we go to parent-teacher meetings, I'm glad that she understands English because I would have no idea of what they say.

Father Thirteen recalls that his economic situation in Mexico was not improving. He kept all his worries from his children. He confided in his wife and she was the only one who knew how desperate he felt. However, the decision-making process proved challenging for both of them:

I spoke to my wife first. I told her about the plan. She knew I had a cousin in Tampa and told her that I was going to talk to him and see if I could stay with him for a while. She thought I was crazy. She was scared and upset with me. She didn't believe I was going to cross. She went back-and-forth with her support.

He and his wife solved this conflict by seeking the guidance of their priest. It was not until after talking to their priest that his wife felt comfortable with his plan. Following the

meeting with the priest, Father Thirteen and his wife together tell the children about the father's idea. Their sons were six and eight years old at the time. He explains:

My wife and I told them together. I told them that I was going away on a trip because I had a job here in the U.S. We thought they were not going to take it well at all. But they surprised us.

Not unlike Fathers Two and Four, Father Thirteen perceives fatherhood as an experience in which his wife's presence is fundamental:

I don't think a father can do such a good job as a father if he's alone, without support, without company. I would not be here today if my wife had not been so supportive and patient with me and with them.

Father Fourteen reports that his wife was always aware of his intention to cross and settle in the U.S. with his family. He describes her as a significant source of emotional support and a confidant. When referring to having witnessed two women and infants apparently drowning in the river, Father Fourteen recalls:

She's a strong woman and I don't think that I could have done all this, go through all this, wait this long to be with them if I hadn't had her support and love and commitment to us and the children. She's the only person, besides you as of today, who knows about what happened that night crossing the river.

Father Fifteen acknowledges the support he received from his wife and her family when he was still in prison. Her support has been a consistent factor in his life, their relationship, and their family. He explains:

She managed to look for help from her family and find a job when I was in prison. She moved in with her parents who had an extra room, so she was with her parents when she had the baby. My wife didn't want me to cross and didn't want to move here. Before I left, she never changed her mind. Her parents helped her understand why moving here would be good for us and the children.

He further describes how well she adjusted to living in the U.S. despite her strong refusal to move here. To a large extent, his support made a significant difference in her adjustment, as revealed in the following account:

She got involved in the children's school and our church, helping with any little thing she could. When she was home alone while the children were in school, she took English lessons. I got her a library card and helped her get books, dictionaries, and bought our first computer soon after they got here.

These passages also speak about the survival of the husband-wife relationship despite the many obstacles they face separated by the border, in different countries, and together after their reunion in the U.S. As demonstrated by the data, the wife is supportive of the father's plan from the beginning only in a few cases. For the most part, her acceptance and support are the result of a long process which often involves the intervention of the family and/or others, such a priest. It is worth-noting that as much as the father makes a decision, so does the wife.

The wife remains faithful to the family and continues to collaborate with the father. It is safe to argue that she could choose not to follow his steps into the U.S., but does so for the children. Falicov (1998) notes that, considering the relevance of the parent-child dyad among Mexican families it is likely that romantic ties between husband and wife fade soon after marriage. Women's status rise when they become mothers who believe that maternal love is greater and more sacred than spousal love. Even in this circumstance, the commitment between father and wife to ensure the survival of the family is evident.

The mother's resettlement and adjustment are not always easy. As described in the following passages, fathers are aware of how challenging this transition is for their wives.

As he recalls his wife's first days in the U.S., Father Seven states:

She missed her parents. She didn't speak English. I didn't speak much English either. She was afraid of talking to people, even other Mexicans. I guess it was all too much for her. It took some time for her to adjust. After a couple of years, she was almost her usual self but in the meantime she spent most of the time at home with the girls, rarely going out at all, until the girls began going to school.

Father Nine clearly describes his wife's initial social isolation soon after her arrival and his perception of her loneliness, helplessness, and sadness:

For a long time she just stayed home while I was at work almost all day long. She didn't speak English yet, so most of the time she spent alone with our daughter. It was very hard for her in the beginning. She wanted to go out and get around the

neighborhood or the city but the neighborhood wasn't a very safe place. She was very sad sometimes.

Simultaneously, Father Nine describes the progress his wife made after a few years as she became proficient with the English language and more confident:

By the time our daughter was in the age to be in kindergarten, my wife had more time in her hands, knew a little more of English and was more able to get around on her own. It took her about two years to begin to feel comfortable here.

A similar situation is described by Father Twelve when he recalls his wife's difficulty with her initial adjustment. He provides examples that reveal his awareness of her feelings of loss and grief. In the following passage he also describes how she dealt with her grief and isolation:

After they came here, my wife started to change. She started to miss her family, our town, our friends, and she felt very lonely and sad just like I felt after I came here. My wife was able to meet other women who spoke Spanish also so she wasn't so isolated.

Father Fourteen tells a different story. His perception of his wife's experience is different from the rest of the sample.

Getting used to living here wasn't as hard as I thought it was going to be for her. She got involved with the children's schools, she took English lessons alone. She can be very focused and determined. She worked for a couple of years, maybe a little more than that. She got her driver's license, learned her way around the city, and she did very well getting settled with the children.

Father Eight describes his wife's fears of abandonment and displays the ability to be genuinely empathetic and imagine what his wife might have thought when he departed:

She never reproached me having come here by myself. One day she told me that she was afraid that I wasn't going to come back and that it was harder, much harder, when we couldn't talk to each other and she wasn't able to know anything about me. There are so many stories of men who leave the wives and children in Mexico and when they get here they find another woman, have more children, and never go back to their families.

These last five descriptions reveal these fathers' unequivocal ability to be attentive to their wives' feelings and experiences. Their compassion and insight have played pivotal roles in their families' adjustment to a new world. As mentioned earlier,

these relationships survived not only the test of time but others also while their children, the main reason for their being here, thrive as they planned it years before. To some extent, the growth and self-empowerment observed in their wives is discussed as part of a transformation process among Mexican immigrant women, a concept pioneered by Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) who argues that the migration process has created a *gendered transition* in which Mexican women are positively transformed as a result of developing new skills and, as a consequence, gain more power than they imagined they could have before immigrating.

In contrast to other views that portray these families as traditionally patriarchal and with a high incidence of domestic violence, Vega (1990) points out that the Mexican family in the U.S. is increasingly characterized by a wide range of structures, from patriarchal to purely egalitarian, with several combinations in between. This is somewhat apparent through the sample if we take into consideration that a few fathers report that their wives have learned English while they still struggle with the language barrier. This may be well explained by recognizing that wives have more opportunities to learn English as they need to use it in order to advocate for their children's education and meet other needs prescribed by established gender roles, namely grocery shopping, housekeeping, etc.

In light of all that has been presented as evidence of the lived experience of the Mexican immigrant fathers interviewed, an opportune question is: What has it all been like? The following theme discusses the fathers' appraisal of the overall experience.

Ninth theme: La cosecha del padre – A father's harvest

The preceding themes have described these fathers' efforts and experiences along the continuum of their journey from contemplation of the possibility of migration to family reunion and resettlement. Both the internal and external factors that compel them to migrate, their sources of support on both sides of the border, the often near-death

experiences they survive, their fathering efforts in addition to being breadwinners, the unforeseen scarcities they face in their daily lives, and the key role of their relationship with their wives have been discussed. Based on their responses, the following descriptions illustrate their perception of their sense of accomplishment and hope for their children.

For Father One, his sense of accomplishment is based on his recognition that his family has achieved some type of stability that helps support his children's development. He states:

We have been able to go on vacation as a family, together, and enjoy nice things. My son likes to play soccer. We have been able to keep him active with his team all year long. I try to go with him to all practices and games. Our daughter likes cheerleading so we let her do that too. I have learned that when you put effort, you are able to get what you want. It has been a positive experience for the children. If my kids are going to grow up in this country, I want them to think about what this country has given us, what it is giving us, and to be appreciative.

Father Two discloses a significant emotional step he took by sharing his feelings with his three children. He also relishes the fact that his children grow and learn in a safe world:

It wasn't until I was away from them that I was able to tell them that I loved them. I thought they always knew I loved them but I hadn't told them before. I was able to give them more than I had ever given them before. My children speak both languages, are getting an education, and live in a safe town.

Father Three celebrates the fact that he has been able to protect his son from the poverty he suffered growing up and that he has made possible for his son to have an education and be better prepared for adulthood than he was:

I want to help him, make sure he has what he needs. I want my son to be happy, to grow in peace, without worrying about not having food to eat or money to buy his schoolbooks. That's how I grew up and I wanted my son not to have to go through life like that. I want them to go to school and have an education. My son speaks English and Spanish. That gives me some peace of mind. He will have a better future than I will. I have hope and faith that this will be good for my son, that he'll go to school and be someone, and that he'll have a good life.

Father Four's description reveals a comparison between his reality in the U.S. today and what his life could have been like had he stayed in Mexico. There is a sincere sense of appreciation in his words as he states:

I would have not been enough to sustain my family with what I made in Mexico. I would have not made enough to give them the basic: food and clothes, or a comfortable life. I would have been wondering about my son going to school and how I was going to help him. Here, I have kept the same job for about seven years. I have the most important thing to have: a family, I have my home. I am very grateful to the U.S.

Father Five's words emphatically indicate that his home is in the U.S. He displays a strong sense of pride for having been able to help his four children, even today as adults:

There's no point in moving back to Mexico. My peace of mind is that after all these years and all the sacrifice, and after losing my first wife, it was all worthwhile. My children are here and they're well, happy, struggling sometimes you know, but it's not the same as if they were struggling in Mexico. They have their families. My son in Mexico is doing fine and whenever I can or he needs me, I help him a little too. All that coming and going was good after all.

Father Six and his wife have three of their children in the U.S. Their daughter does not want to immigrate and they have come to accept it. His description speaks of both his peace of mind with his decision and his sense of accomplishment:

I needed to be here. That was the right thing to do for all of us. It's still good for the family today, the children especially. They feel supported by us and the school. They live better than they would in Mexico. They do well in school. I enjoy seeing my children grow up here because, despite our fear of being deported, there seems to be more security and stability for us.

Father Seven provides an assessment of his personal growth while he relishes the stability that he has created for his family, especially his two daughters:

I think I learned that I have more courage than I used to think. I did things that were very difficult, I never imagined I could do, some things I never wanted to do at all, but I did them. I crossed. I brought my family. I think we're better now. We're fine. The girls are growing well, they're in school, and they speak English well. My wife and I don't speak well yet but we know how to get by. I also learned to be more independent, to do things for myself. In Mexico, my wife used to do everything for me.

Father Eight's account also reveals a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction for having been able to provide a stable life for his wife and his son. When describing his experience, he states:

I think it made me stronger. I was born very poor and my family was very poor. I never imagined crossing the border to come here. I knew people who did it but I was always afraid of doing that. But I did it.

I wanted to do here what I couldn't do in Mexico: to be able to take care of them. I think she now has more than she thought she was going to have, a good family, a good son, a nice place to live, to be comfortable. My son is fine. We talk and spend time together. He's a good son.

Father Nine's description depicts a seemingly average family in the U.S. today, enjoying a sense of stability and overall satisfaction, in particular about his two daughters' well being:

I have a store with other guys and work all weekend too. My wife doesn't have to work but she takes care of the girls all the time. My older daughter is involved in sports too. She has school and homework to do. They are good girls, happy girls, and they can have whatever they want; at least, what we can give to them. The oldest is in fourth grade, does very well in school.

Father Ten has achieved some financial stability and modest success with his business. He enjoys the ability to support his family and his wife's family in Mexico, and enjoy certain leisure activities with his wife and five children:

The children go to school here and they do very well. The oldest ones are in high school and we don't know yet what they are going to do after high school. We get to send some money out to my parents, her parents also, we get to go out to eat sometimes, and the children have what they need. My wife has a part-time job cleaning houses. The children are getting an education, have friends, and like a lot living here. I own a restaurant with a friend and it's doing very well now.

Father Eleven displays a strong sense of pride in the following statement. It is evident that he feels that he has met the goal he set out to achieve:

I was able to do what I was supposed to do: to care for my family the best way I could, to give them what they needed. There was no way to know whether once I went back to Mexico things were going to be good for us or not. We are together now, we have a nice home, and the children are doing fine. My oldest son was still very young when he came here and now he is doing very well in school. My other son is two years old, he's a good boy.

Father Twelve reveals his sense of accomplishment for providing his 11-year-old daughter with a comfortable life. He and his wife had planned their lives together in the U.S. for many years. He states:

I think about all the years my wife and I put into this idea. Now we're here and that's what we wanted. Now we can offer our daughter a good life, a better life than she would have had in Mexico.

As he assesses his overall experience, Father Thirteen talks about his perceived personal growth and sense of accomplishment, especially as it relates to his sons:

I think it has made me stronger. It has given me more hope about life in general. It showed me that I'm stronger than I thought I was. Having brought my boys and wife here has taken away so many worries about how to take care of them and also the doubt about being able to take care of them. They are good boys and I'm very proud of them. They have good friends.

Father Fourteen's description focuses on the peace he is able to enjoy and his pride for his three children's growth and well-being. He also mentions his increased sense of appreciation:

I know we're happy now. There's more peace here. My children are growing to be intelligent, kind, proud and healthy children, doing all kinds of things. This experience made me appreciate life more than I had before. It made me appreciate my family even much more than I did before I left.

Father Fifteen's description emphasizes his sense of happiness and pride in his two children's accomplishments. Moreover, his words suggest how much his children have inspired him:

Overall, I'm a happy man and a proud father. My children are good children and have given me many satisfactions. They are very good students, motivated, and always got awards in school. They have helped me so much just by being in my life.

These descriptions are similar to the findings in a study by Roer-Strier, Strier, Este, Shimonin, and Clark (2005) which aimed to explore the impact of immigration on fathers. They report that most of the fathers in the study emphasized the opportunities that living in Canada will provide their children, especially as they relate to education and

future work opportunities. Their sense of accomplishment and celebration are centered around the potential they have been able to create for their children.

A look at the sample interviewed reveals that – indisputably – these fathers have succeeded in several areas. They have achieved the goals they set out to accomplish. They successfully immigrated to and settled in the U.S. Their hard labor, determination, strong work ethic, and commitment made it possible for them to save money to sustain their families from the U.S., and save money to pay for their travel to the U.S. Their families succeeded at crossing the border and joining them here. Adaptation to U.S. society proves challenging for everyone, but the children adjust well and continue to thrive. As the sociopolitical environment in the U.S. becomes inhospitable for many immigrants, especially Mexican immigrants, new threats appear and these fathers deal with them on a daily basis with the resources they have. Despite the demanding nature of this experience, feelings of pride, satisfaction, and peace of mind are reported amidst some degree of uncertain stability and in some cases fear of loss of everything.

The aforementioned themes emerge from and are common to all fifteen fathers interviewed and their descriptions. The next step of phenomenological reduction is arriving at the essential or invariant structure, a brief description that exemplifies the experiences of all the participants in the study.

4. The Lived Experience of the Mexican Immigrant Father

This study examines Mexican immigrant fathers' understanding of their experience of fathering along the journey of migration and is guided by the grand tour question (Creswell, 1994; Spradly & McCurdy, 1972): How do Mexican immigrant fathers who initially migrate alone and eventually reunite with their families in the U.S. perceive and describe their experience? The nine themes that have emerged let the reader see the “deeper significance or structure of the lived experience being described” (Munhall, 2007, p. 163) and lead to a brief description that exemplifies the experiences of all the

participants in the study. The following process being discussed, namely, synthesis also relies heavily on the model articulated by Moustakas (1994) who defines this step as “the intuitive integration of the fundamental textural and structural descriptions into a unified statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole” (p. 100). This step embodies the qualitative process; one that invites the reader to focus on essences of the phenomenon under study.

The process of synthesis brings us to the final challenge of phenomenological reduction, which is to arrive at the construction of a complete textural description of the experience, enabling the uncovering of its nature and meaning (Moustakas, 1994). There is ample evidence in these accounts to suggest that these fathers are survivors. This survivorship is not separate from sacrifice. It is a type of sacrifice that is shared with and experienced by the entire family, as all family members sooner or later embark upon the same journey to reunite with the father. Once the father settles, provides, and engages in fathering efforts from the U.S., crossing is not a matter of the past. It never is a matter of the past. New borders are found in the home. Borders rise among family members. Invisible but powerful borders keep the father and the family in an inescapable midpoint between Mexico and the U.S. Crossing back-back-and-forth between worlds is a significant aspect of the lived experience of the Mexican immigrant father.

Brief Description of the Lived Experience of the Mexican Immigrant Father

The life-world of the Mexican immigrant father, aware of his existence (*Dasein*), is filled with many crossings; not all of them covering geographical distances. He crosses to be able to be a father. As he treads across the border, he crosses into the realm of the foreign-born. His life-world contains both, what lies ahead and what he left

behind. He crosses between the past and the present, walking towards an uncertain future. Once settled alone, he works to sustain his family by crossing back-and-forth between the world of the documented and the world of the undocumented. His love and care toward his loved ones (*Sorge*) cross space and time to reach his children in Mexico; he supports them financially and also emotionally by asking, advising, encouraging, supporting, and disciplining from the U.S. When his family crosses to join him, his intending is directed toward them as they follow his footsteps; he crosses with them vicariously. When the family arrives, in his memory he crosses back to his own arrival and adjustment. By intending toward himself, he intends toward his family and finds ways to help them adjust. Once again, he crosses between past and present, walking towards an uncertain future but this time joined by his loved ones. Within his home, he crosses back-and-forth between the couple of parents that he and his wife comprise, and his U.S.-born children. He crosses back-and-forth between his children, between the one(s) born in the U.S. and the others born in Mexico. He crosses the border inside his home and inside his heart. Because not all children arrive at the same time and some children remain in Mexico, he continues to cross the border. He arrives and settles with each family member's arrival. Under the ominous possibility of deportation, he crosses between fear and hope every day. The Mexican father's destiny (*Thrownness*) involves crossing many borders.

The aforementioned brief description comprises the final phase in the phenomenological method. It requires that the investigator synthesize and integrate (Giorgi, 1985; Moustakas, 1994) the insights contained in the transformed horizons or core themes into a brief description of the essence of the phenomenon. This was achieved while carefully taking into account that the essence of an experience is never completely exhausted and that the fundamental synthesis from facts to meanings simply

represents the essence at a particular time and place, as observed from the vantage point of an individual investigator who follows an intuitive and reflective study of the phenomenon (Moustakas).

The next step deals with a different type of data: information collected from qualified professionals, as mentioned in Chapter Three. The purpose of interviewing these individuals with significant experience working with fathers similar to those who comprise this study's sample was to have other sources of data and be able to relate them in order to counteract threats to validity (Glesne, 1999) or interpretive validity (Maxwell, 1992).

Triangulated Data

Five professionals were contacted by phone and email, and interviewed at a time and place convenient to them. Three case managers in the social services field, one home-based counselor, and a pastor from a local congregation participated. Each interview began with the question: "Based on your work with Mexican immigrant fathers, what are your impressions about them?" and evolved into a conversation comprised of several open-ended questions. Their responses were somewhat consistent with the transcriptions and the investigator's impressions. Notably, they were also consistent with the literature; both the one that depicts Mexican immigrant fathers from a positive lens and the one that reflects negative stereotypes about them. The investigator refers to professionals who participated in these interviews as *respondents*.

Professionals' impressions of Mexican immigrant fathers are contained in the descriptions discussed below. First of all, respondents identify strengths that they have observed and, therefore, described fathers as brave, committed, responsible good providers, and willing to make sacrifices for their families. These perceptions are consistent with the data; especially with the themes *Crossing to be able to be a father*, *Beyond breadwinning*, and *The ultimate sacrifice*. In addition, they are consistent with

observations by Falicov (1999), and Shields and Behrman (2004). One respondent explained that by 'sacrifice,' she meant:

They leave their families and culture behind to rise their families out of poverty ...they don't mind crossing the border afoot and risking their lives in order to send money to their children so that they can have a better way of life.

Respondents speak of the fraud and deception often experienced by Mexican immigrant fathers when they have been lured by others to immigrate and find work, but upon their arrival they learn that such promises were not true and so they find themselves alone and helpless. This is consistent with reports that confirm that many immigrants are often victims of exploitation when they are recruited in Mexico for jobs in the U.S. Not only are they promised jobs that do not exist but also are asked to pay recruitment fees that leave them in precarious economic situations for several years. Employers often confiscate their documents, ensuring they cannot leave their jobs. Others use the threat of calling the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency as a means of asserting control over the workers (Bauer, 2007).

Other perceptions include that these fathers often become nearly homeless as a result of not having a permanent dwelling but yet they do not stop sending money to their families. In regard to the fraud they fall prey to, one respondent stated:

Sometimes, they need to come up with an enormous amount of money so that they can send for their families. Occasionally, the coyote sets the price to be paid. The father agrees, but later on the coyote demands more money to release the family. The father finds himself forced to ask for more money from others or engage in illegal activities in order to get the money.

Although, no father reports that he had been homeless, both Father Three and Father Ten report having lived in homeless shelters shortly after they arrived. This view is congruent also with the theme *Beyond breadwinning*. Unanimously, they perceive fathers as individuals who work long hours, are not particularly selective about the jobs they take, and always seize any work opportunities they find. While they are here alone, they focus on working, saving, and sending money to support their families, and looking

for a home for the family to have ready when they all reunite in the U.S. As a result of family immigration and resettlement in the U.S., fathers appreciate their families more than they had in Mexico and develop closer relationships with their children. Upon reunification, some fathers experience marital difficulties with their wives as a result of not having been together for a long time. This perception is consistent with Falicov's (1999) observation of the changing role and responsibilities of the mother after her arrival. Couples are able to learn from their experiences. As one professional indicated:

In the beginning, mother and father have difficulties because of the time they were separated...later the relationship becomes more solid and there's more communication.

According to these respondents, before family reunification in the U.S., fathers maintain contact with their children through phone calls; many of them call every week and send money weekly or biweekly. Fathers are likely to purchase a pre-paid phone card, which is affordable for them. Also, many of them have cellular phones and are able to reach their families immediately in the event of an emergency. This observation is also observed across the sample when these fathers describe the many ways in which they remain in contact with their children: *Beyond breadwinning*. One of the respondents states that fathers are also likely to send material goods, including certain foods and items requested by their children, which is a way for them to show their children the good reasons as to why they left and live apart from one another. It is implied in this observation that some fathers experience some degree of guilt for which they try to overcompensate for their absence.

It became clear that professionals are keenly aware of the challenges faced by these fathers. Among such challenges, they identify: fathers falling victim of extortion, exploitation, and racism; their inability to speak English and the lack of opportunities to learn the language; cultural shock as a result of moving to a new country with different cultural values, laws, and weather; and policy matters that constrain their ability to obtain

a driver's license or rent an apartment. Several fathers in the sample admit that their wives and children speak English but they were not able to learn it because they spend most of the day at work with coworkers whose native tongue is also Spanish. Therefore, they have limited opportunities to learn English. Two of the fathers admit to have used alcohol as a way of coping with feelings of loss, grief, and loneliness. One of the professionals explained:

The fact that they do not qualify to obtain a driver's license makes them lie about their identity and find illegal ways to live in the country, such as using fake identification. While they are here alone, without their families, they experience loneliness and isolation which sometimes cause them to develop depression, alcohol and substance use, and engage in extramarital affairs.

Another major obstacle identified by the respondents is the change in family dynamics caused by the lack of opportunities to enjoy family time. Parents work and children are in school and involved in other activities. This is a significant change for the entire family because this way of life is very different from what they knew in Mexico. These views are congruent with the theme *The other poverty*. One respondent explained:

There is little time to share as a family here. They are used to spending time together in Mexico. After the mother and the children come to be with the father, in the beginning, everyone is very happy to be together. Children start school and things go well for a while. But later on, children (especially adolescents) refuse to go to school and/or start having behavior problems at school and home.

Another respondent notes that the strength of the father-child relationship after reunification usually depends on the length of separation between the two of them. If not much time has passed between departure and reunification, then the father is usually more involved with the child. When several years of separation have gone by, the child might not remember the father and is only bonded to the mother, which adds more problems to the family. This is somewhat consistent with the experiences of three fathers whose first children had not been born at the time of his departure. Another respondent described the father-child relationship after reunification as follows:

These fathers try to be close to their children, but the children often feel hurt and angry because they were brought to the U.S. without having a choice. Coming here is very stressful for these children and so they don't want to open up to the father. The father resents the distance he feels with the child and that's when we hear them say to the child things like: "I have done everything for you so that you may have a better life..." This is a typical comment I hear fathers make.

Respondents also touch on the father's relationship with his wife. They reported that both the length of separation and the difficulties posed by reunification in a new country add more stress to the relationship. The new lifestyle takes a toll on the couple. The father works all day and, depending on the family situation, the wife has to work also which is a new experience for her. If the mother does not have to work, she rarely sees the father. The likely difficult situations for the couple are many and so they experience a new kind of poverty, *The other poverty*. As one respondent puts it:

Before reuniting with his wife, the relationship is a long-distance relationship and sometimes the father gets another woman. If the family shares the home with another family, friends, or other relatives, the wife is often accused of being unfaithful. Sometimes the father displaces his frustration onto his wife and that's when we find out about domestic violence in the home.

Certain aspects of the fathers' experiences obtained by the investigator are not congruent with the information provided by the respondents. For instance, a few observations made by the professionals confirm society's negative stereotypical views of these individuals; such as infidelity. None of the fathers in the sample volunteered any information pertaining to having been unfaithful to their spouses. The point is not to debate whether they were or were not, but to clarify that espousing a perception of these men (or any man) as prone to be unfaithful would entail adopting a pathological stance on human behavior and a form of deficit thinking, the role-inadequacy perspective (RIP) (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997). One must not assume that sexual desire is the sole element to explain this behavior. If this were the case, perhaps such behavior is more related to coping behaviors. From such an angle, Levant (1992) contends that: "lust in men stems from defensive autonomy, which makes emotional intimacy difficult and, from

destructive entitlement, often amplified by self-sacrifice, in which sex and sexy women are often viewed as rewards' for hard work" (p. 394). However, the investigator holds that neither fear nor lust is a likely motivator among these men's unfaithfulness, but rather, grief, isolation, and longing for intimacy in whatever way they experience and need it.

The fact that fathers did not volunteer this information during the interviews could be explained by assuming that the disclosure of behaviors such as extramarital relationships and substance use are frowned upon by society or harshly judged, thus causing feelings of shame and guilt. It is unlikely that a participant would disclose such intimate information with an individual with whom he does not have a long-standing and trustworthy relationship. In addition, searching for behaviors that are censored by society was not the purpose of this study. Triangulated data offer views that complement and support several of the investigator's findings. Those that are not consistent with the findings warrant further investigation and, therefore, create more opportunities to contribute to the body of knowledge of the phenomenon under study.

Findings and Final Thoughts

It is known that people migrate for several reasons. For many, it entails more than a choice. Rather, the act of departure stems from a sense of duty to ensure their own survival or the survival of their loved ones in their home countries, or both. This humanistic view is not espoused by many in the U.S. today. The ideas and feelings evoked by the concept of immigration have changed significantly throughout the years, depending on the politics and economics of the time, and they will continue to change. Historically, Mexican immigration has been a major reason for grievances between both nations. The fact remains though, that waves of Mexican immigrants are unlikely to stop despite increasingly stringent immigration policies. They will continue to comprise the largest immigrant group for years to come. Because the threat of terrorism after

September 11, 2001, and the need to protect our borders permeate the rhetoric on immigration policy in the first decade of this century, U.S. society is more inclined to look at immigration as a macro-systemic concept. It does not seem to be concerned with what the experience of immigration is like for an individual or a family.

In the midst of so many unanswered questions that only a handful of scholars seem curious enough to ask, a modest but significant amount of knowledge about the experience of the immigrant father in the U.S. is beginning to be uncovered; far from voluminous but nonetheless timely and relevant. As another step in that direction, this study focuses on Mexican immigrant fathers; especially on their fathering efforts toward their families, especially their children, while creating the appropriate conditions to bring the rest of the family from Mexico. The investigator refers to this phenomenon as *cross-border fathering*. A review of the literature reveals different and often very opposite views of this group; some supported by research, others maintained by long-held myths and assumptions about Mexican husbands and fathers in general. The same degree of dissent is observed in the descriptions reflected in the triangulated data. This situation is a strong indication that this group can no longer be stereotyped, neither positively or negatively. The evidence suggests that there are varying degrees of motivation and opportunities across this sample; further, among Mexican immigrants in general.

The research that has been carried out in this area appears to be largely positivist and quantitative in nature, focusing on acculturation and mental health outcomes among Mexican immigrants. Little attention has been given to the description of the experience of being a Mexican immigrant father; much less to cohorts similar to the one under study in this project. Because these fathers began to acknowledge the need to migrate in order to sustain their families much before they departed, and because the reunification process lasted for a few years in some cases, this investigation ambitiously covers the experience of fathering among these men from pre-

migration to resettlement. There is abundant evidence in the descriptions to support the claim that fathering and migration are inevitably undividable for these participants. Successful fathering would have not been possible without migration.

Because the study seeks to grasp both a description and the meaning of the experience, a phenomenological methodology was therefore proposed as a method of research that would allow for the investigator to explore the lived experience of Mexican immigrant fathers. Such exploration required long interviews and participant observation so that fathers would be able to recall vivid moments that comprise the phenomenon of cross-border fathering. Lived experience is explained by Burch (1990) as a concept that “amounts to something distinctive, a class of significant or memorable events, whose true meaning (if we listen to the past participial tone of the adjective) is something we come to recognize in retrospect” (p. 132). For Dilthey (1985), lived experience is the “structural nexus which preserves the past as a 'presence' in the present” (p. 16). As one can see, the act of knowing about these fathers requires that they would be able to bring their memories to the present time with the investigator.

Long interviews yielded a vast amount of data which are analyzed through phenomenological reduction and give rise to nine core themes that emerge from the descriptions. The processes of synthesis and integration of the findings brings to the surface a brief description that exemplifies the lived experience of all participants in the study. These themes speak about the Mexican immigrant father feeling the need to depart in order to fulfill his role of father, the network of family and kin in both countries that supports his efforts, the degree of risk often experienced to cross the border, the fathering efforts that extend beyond the act of bread-winning, the vow to never allow his family to experience such painful moments again, the scarcity of human contact experienced as a result of little time left to be spent with one another, the awareness that the border is still a part of their lives both geographically and psychologically, the

partnership with his wife, and the fruits gathered from having experienced the phenomenon of cross-border fathering.

Phenomenology seeks the very nature of a phenomenon. It looks for “that which makes a some “thing” what it is – and without which it could not be what it is” (Husserl 1982/1913; Merleau-Ponty, 2003/1962). The essence of a phenomenon, claims van Manen (1990), may only be intuited or grasped through the study of the particulars or instances that pertain, in this case, to the Mexican immigrant fathers. To arrive to the essence of the phenomenon of cross-border fathering is the purpose of this study. All individuals experience it; therefore, it is invariant, and it is a reduction to the ‘essentials’ of their experiences (Moustakas, 1994). For these fathers, the invariant structure or essence of cross-border fathering is that crossing is a never-ending endeavor. The geographical border separates countries and loved ones. The new borders he discovers rise within his home in the U.S. and separate parents from children, siblings from siblings, and deserving from non-deserving. Therefore, not crossing the border is never an option.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The study of the human mind is so difficult, so caught in the dilemma of being both the object and the agent of its own study, that it cannot limit its inquiries to ways of thinking that grew out of yesterday's physics. Rather, the task is so compellingly important that it deserves all the rich variety of insight that we can bring to the understanding of what man *[sic]* makes of his world, of his fellow beings, and of himself. That is the spirit in which we should proceed. (Bruner, 1990, xiii)

This study focuses on the phenomenon of cross-border fathering. It explores the lived experience of Mexican fathers who immigrate to and settle in the U.S. initially alone and eventually bring the rest of their families with them. Their accounts are evidence that they immigrated to be able to fulfill their perceived roles as fathers; that is, to provide for their families. The focus of this study is not to explore participants' fathering efforts from the U.S. only. It looks at their experiences as fathers along the continuum of migration, from pre-migration to resettlement. The phenomenological interview allows fathers to bring experience to the present; in other words, to re-live it. Their memories are vividly documented in thick description so that they may invite the reader to imagine and to begin to understand what these experiences might have been like for these fathers. The essence of the phenomenon highlights the father's consistent task of crossing emotional borders within his own home, family, and heart.

Of significant interest in this study is the time at which it was carried out. Recruitment efforts began in January 2006, following IRB approval. Interviews and data-gathering efforts began shortly after and continued throughout 2007 and early 2008. These are meaningful times in U.S. history and for immigration policy-makers but – more so – for immigrants themselves. Within this two-year span, immigrants, and their supporters and advocates joined efforts and raised their voices of concern collectively in unprecedented ways.

Sociopolitical Context and Inquiry

Because it became known to everyone that the 19 hijackers involved in the September 11 attacks entered the U.S. legally, although a few of them carried fraudulent documents, the government began to institute much tougher screening programs to determine who was trying to enter the country and why. Shortly after the attacks, Homeland Security officials addressed Congress expressing the fear that al-Qaida operatives could try to enter the country by crossing the border with Mexico (Voice of America, 2005). Increasingly, many sectors of American society and politicians felt that more needed to be done to keep the country safe from further attacks.

Not surprisingly, on December 16, 2005, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the *Border Protection, Anti-Terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005*, which among other provisions demanded the construction of a 700-mile fence along the Mexican-U.S. border, required the federal government to take custody of undocumented immigrants detained by local authorities, mandated employers to verify workers' legal status through electronic means, and made illegal immigration a felony (The Library of Congress, 2007). In response to the new law, on May 1, 2006, an estimated one million immigrants and advocates took to the streets of many U.S. cities. Organizers of the nationwide event, referred to as 'A Day without Immigrants' and/or 'The Great American Boycott' asked those opposing tighter restrictions on immigration – namely immigrants themselves – to boycott all sectors of the economy, including going to work and school. Many stores closed. Some showed signs that read: 'United in peace: out of respect for members of our community our stores are closed today, May 1' (Bowes, 2006).

Almost a year later, on April 7, 2006, the U.S. Senate failed to reach an agreement on a proposal that would have allowed millions of undocumented immigrants to find a path to legal residence through a guest-worker program, introduced by

President Bush. A final vote of 46-53 killed the president's plan and left unresolved the fate of an estimated 12 million undocumented immigrants. In response to the government's refusal to provide a path to legalization, on May 1, 2007, an estimated number of 200,000 individuals comprised of immigrants' rights groups, immigrants, and U.S.-born citizens rallied together again across the country. One way to explain the significant smaller number of demonstrators compared to the previous year could be explained by looking at the increase in government raids targeting undocumented workers and the fear of repercussions from employers if they did not show-up for work. Many immigrants were said to be afraid of police raids aimed at finding and deporting undocumented workers (British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC], 2006).

In January 2008, the State of Indiana Senate passed State Bill 335, also known as *Illegal Alien Matters*, sponsored by Senator Mike Delph (Indianapolis). Generally speaking, among other provisions, the purpose of SB335 was to: (1) prohibit employers from knowingly hiring undocumented immigrants and, (2) authorize prosecuting attorneys to file a civil action against an employer for knowingly hiring an unauthorized immigrant in the county where the immigrant is employed (Indiana General Assembly, 2008). SB 335 died before it could be heard by the House of Representatives.

It was amidst such unexpectedly hostile sociopolitical climate that this study took place and data were obtained. The investigator was aware of the possibility that participants might not feel safe to come forward to volunteer their time and share their experiences of fathering, which are parallel to their experiences as immigrants. Without a doubt, the role of gatekeepers or *intermediaries* was essential because the well-established relationships that they had with participants made it possible for both participant and investigator to start the interview on solid ground. Remarkably, while they shared their fears of raids and deportations, these fathers were sincere and seemingly unafraid of being reported to the authorities when they discussed their immigration

journey. This trusting attitude observed across the sample is consistent with the investigator's experience as a clinician. It is not uncommon for Latino immigrant clients to disclose their immigration status during the course of treatment, especially when they believe that they share ethnic and socio-cultural traits with the helping professional.

Member Check

Despite the level of comfort with the investigator observed among these individuals during the interviews, member check proved more challenging than expected. In fact, when the investigator requested gatekeepers to contact participants to complete follow-up interviews, only four fathers were found. At the moment at which a second member check was completed, as a final validation step, five of the fifteen interviewed fathers were found. They were able to verify that the transcriptions were consistent with their descriptions. Four of the five fathers were able to identify or relate to the nine core themes. The remaining father did not identify with the themes *The Ultimate Sacrifice* and *Never Again* because his and his family's crossing posed no near-death experiences. Because gatekeepers are not allowed to disclose any information about clients, their whereabouts were unknown and, therefore, not all fathers were able to be located. There is no evidence to suggest that those fathers who were not found were deported or returned to Mexico. Quite the contrary, it is possible to entertain the idea that the search for work opportunities elsewhere compelled them to move again. Scholars' observations of Latino immigrants reveal that they comprise a mobile population within the U.S. (Gouveia & Stull, 1997; Rodriguez & Hagan, 1991), especially when it concerns to males (Lowell & Suro, 2002).

Mexican immigrant males usually display high geographical mobility as a result of work opportunities. Approximately five percent of the U.S. labor force – or 7.2 million workers out of a labor force of 148 million – are comprised of undocumented migrant workers. They concentrate in a few occupations: farming, cleaning, construction, and

food preparation (Passel, 2006). Construction constitutes a significant source of employment for both documented and undocumented Mexican and Central American workers, who constitute about 30% of the country's construction labor force (U.S. Census 2004). According to Fussell (2006), this labor force is highly mobile. It has become part of the phenomenon of 'hurricane chasers' – construction workers who arrive in the aftermath of a natural disaster to clean up and rebuild affected areas. They are drawn by the prospect of high wages – between \$12 and \$20 per hour – and a lot of work. In sum, it is possible that those fathers who were not available for member check might have engaged in internal migration within the U.S. in search of work opportunities elsewhere, especially when considering the slowing down of U.S. economy soon after September 11, 2001.

Phenomenological Discussion of Findings

Nine core themes and the essence that exemplifies the experience of all fathers engaging in cross-border fathering emerge from the data through the process of phenomenological reduction. The discussion that follows reintroduces the findings within the philosophical framework with which this study was designed. This is done by recognizing that the act of interpretation is an ongoing and always-unfolding process, unlikely to come to an end but remain alive for as long as the data are at hand. Insight and awareness of one's own subjectivity give way to interpretations that are likely to evolve over time. Favorable to the world of sciences is the opportunity for dialogue, acquiescence, and also dissent created by those who gravitate towards this realm of inquiry. For this to occur, of course, the uniqueness of each individual and her/his life-world ought to be considered given that perception and insight are intrinsic but also environment-specific processes. Insight is fundamental to the interpretation of the findings. Pollio, Henley, and Thompson (1997) note that insight may be considered in terms of plausibility and illumination. Plausibility pertains to the reader's ability to see the

relationship between the interpretation and the data. Illumination refers to the opportunity to see phenomena in a different light; thus, to allow for a new understanding.

As mentioned in Chapter One, among those who spearheaded this philosophical thinking are Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty. After having discussed the findings at length in Chapter Four, it is the investigator's position that the following colloquy would be incomplete without a return to their legacy and their contemplation on the lived experience, the experience of being-in-the-world, or "the search for what it means to be human" (van Manen, 1990, p. 12). As this study evolves, it proceeds to uncover the possible meaning structures of the lived experience of the Mexican immigrant father. Furthermore, it acquires an increasingly fuller understanding of what it means to be in-the-world as a man, a spouse, a father, and an immigrant in the U.S. considering the sociocultural context which – phenomenologically speaking – is comprised of one's body, space, time, and relationships.

Intentionality: In-the-world, with the world

As discussed in Chapter One, intentionality is a term closely associated with phenomenology and involves the recognition that all acts of consciousness humans engage in, every experience they have, is intentional: it is essentially *consciousness of* something or another person. Because awareness is entirely directed towards objects and others, whether they are in the present or not, intentions are categorized depending upon others' presence or absence (van Kaam, 1969). Empty intentions are those that target something that is not yet manifest; individuals may intend things that are absent as they do not always deal with immediate presences. Human thought is such that it can transcend the present and intend the absent. Empty intending may take several forms: the absence of the other side of things that individuals do not see; the absence of things being remembered, the absence of things being depicted, and the absence of those

being far away. On the other hand, filled intentions are those that target someone or something that is present before the one who intends.

For Sartre (1993/1943), consciousness and the world are given at once. Being is exploding into the world, evolving from a nothingness of consciousness and the world to suddenly bursting out as consciousness-in-the-world, one with the world. This act of bursting never ends. Such is the nature of consciousness to which Sartre refers as 'intentionality' (Christiaens, 2006). Sartre's view of intentionality applied to the experience of the Mexican immigrant father suggests that the father is constantly being born. He and his consciousness burst-in-the world as a human being, later as a father, later as an immigrant father; being is constantly exploding, knowing himself, his challenges, his courage, his victories, his fears, and his relationship with his family. Therefore, as his loved ones burst-in-the world, so does he.

Often, the term 'intentionality' is simply summarized as *aboutness*, or the relationship between mental acts and the external world. As van Manen (1990) puts it: "All human activity is always oriented activity, directed by that which orients it. In this way we discover a person's world or landscape" (p. 182). As discussed in Chapter One, Heidegger (1962/1936) understands intentionality as *Sorge* (care or concern) and suggests that human beings experience connectedness with the world precisely through the act of caring about others. Intentionality demands that the individual recognize that self and world are inseparable components of meaning (Moustakas, 1994).

From this vantage point, one could argue that intentionality permeates through the entire lived experience of the Mexican immigrant father as evidenced by the fathering efforts displayed from pre-migration until the moment the interviews take place. The father's acts of intending, his *aboutness*, are directed toward his family but his children in particular. Descriptions that portray his struggles with poverty in Mexico, and the internal turmoil and ambivalence stemming from his decision to depart indicate that

his awareness was not directed only toward himself and his perceived sense of helplessness, but primordially toward his children. The father's intentionality reveals both types of intending.

The father's empty intentions stem from lack of opportunities in Mexico and target that which he desires and has not yet manifested: a stable and fulfilling life with his family, successfully crossing the border, being able to sustain his loved ones from the U.S., the hope that his children will thrive as he firmly believes they should, and goals or dreams that have not yet materialized. His intending is also directed towards surviving in a country that is increasingly more suspicious of immigrants. His intending is undividedly directed towards protecting his children from such hostility and the shadow of deportation. Filled intentions are represented by the dreams that did come true; some of which have caused pain and still do, and some that evoke feelings of pride and a sense of accomplishment such as crossing the border, supporting the family, reuniting with the family in the U.S., and seeing his children grow amidst possibility. Several of the father's empty intentions eventually become filled intentions as a result of his effort and his family's effort.

The evidence suggests that these fathers' motivation to cross the border is to rise above poverty by seeking work opportunities in the U.S. where they are able to fulfill what they perceive to be the role of a father: breadwinner; thus, *crossing to be able to be a father*. Several compounding stressors identified by them are the birth of a child, debt, perceived helplessness, and desperation. These fathers struggled – often silently – with their inability to provide for their children's well being. They come from low-income and often extremely poor social environments. Yet, they hope and work for (by intending towards) the best their children could have. Several studies have shown that people who are poor have few aspirations for themselves but hold high hopes for their children's futures and educational attainment (Tuason, 2008). Mexican parents are no exception.

The emphasis on *la educación de los niños* (children's education) is one of the defining characteristics of Mexican families. Their children's academic achievement is but one example of the empty intentions that become filled. Others remain empty. The father's intentionality toward his family permeates throughout his lived experience. His commitment to his family is unquestionable despite his interdependence with a world that is in constant flux and uncertain.

The Life-world of the Mexican Immigrant Father

The life-world emerges as a philosophical concern in contrast with modern science, which still has great authority in our culture because people believe that it provides the only truth there is about the nature of things. However, despite society's increased reliance on modern science, phenomenologists still hold that there are two worlds: one that is objective and scientific, and another that is the subjective or *life-world* or "the world in which we live" (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 146). The idea of the life-world, as the world of lived experience, derives from Husserl (1970/1936) who describes it as "the world of immediate experience," the world as "already-there," "pre-given," the world as experienced in the "natural primordial attitude," and with "original natural life" (pp. 103 - 186). By "natural", Husserl refers to what is original and naïve, before interpreted by theoretical reflection and empiricism.

In this lens, the life-world of the Mexican immigrant father is impinged upon not only by the typical tasks of parenthood but also by other forces – both contextual and intrinsic such as poverty in Mexico and other types of poverty in the U.S., immigration policies that create unforeseen inequality within the family, and the fear of losing everything. He faces these challenges not without courage, sacrifice, and the support of his wife; the feelings of pride for his children; and the transnational familism that contains him and others in both countries. This last element in particular, previously identified as *en familia* (we are among friends) is a given – or pre-given – in Latin American culture

and constitutes the best example of the already-there elements that are seldom questioned and dissected for interpretation by the Mexican *familia* (family), *los amigos* (friends), *los padrinos* (godparents), or *los vecinos* (neighbors). The father, just as millions of individuals in Latin America, is born into a world in which these cultural traits and experiences comprise his life-world; they are already given by nature. It is in this life-world, the natural world, where the father intends towards fathering

The vast complexity of an individual's life-world is comprised of his lived experiences and the themes with which these experiences can be described and interpreted. Consequently, it is possible to identify and discuss the many and different life-worlds that belong to others and their realities. For instance, we know that the life-world of a low-income Mexican immigrant father has different experiential qualities from that of a middle-class Caucasian U.S.-born father. Thus, there is a myriad of life-worlds; that of a working father, the mother, the child, the sibling, etc., all which in Sartre's (1993/1943) view, are continuously bursting-in-to-the world and, according to Heidegger (1962/1936), are connecting with one another's. Further, each individual might appear as if inhabiting different life-worlds at different times of the day (i.e.: home and work), day of the week, time of the year, and so forth (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973). From this vantage point, the Mexican immigrant father's cultural heritage, the tasks he surmounts, the familial and social supports that contain and sustain him and the themes that emerge from the interviews all comprise his life-world.

Life-world Existentials

The understanding of the life-world acquires a central role in the following discussion. In fact, according to van Manen (1990), phenomenological research efforts "are really explorations into the structure of the human lifeworld, the lived world as experienced in everyday situations and relations" (p. 101). An individual's life-world may also be studied by looking at the fundamental themes that manifest in his life. Not

surprisingly, universal themes such as love, life, death, loss, etc. have long been explored and described by the human sciences. Without any doubt, these themes comprise the life-worlds of all individuals at one moment or another. In his discussion of hermeneutic phenomenological reflection, van Manen introduces four essential realms of the life-world, also referred to as *existentials*. These existentials might also be understood as fundamental philosophical themes that permeate through the life-worlds of all human beings, regardless of their gender, history, culture, and geographical location. They belong to the existential ground with which all individuals experience the world and help guide the reflection and discussion steps of this research study; they are: lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality), and lived human relation (relationality of communality). Therefore, the following reflection on the phenomenon of cross-border fathering among Mexican immigrant fathers is drawn upon these four life-world existentials.

The Landscape of Cross-border Fathering (spatiality)

When most people think of space, they usually refer to it in mathematical terms (length, height, depth, weigh, etc.) and also distances from one point to another (miles, kilometers, hours driving, etc.), countries, territories, etc. In phenomenology, space refers to *lived space* or *felt space* (spatiality); a concept that might prove challenging to articulate since the experience of lived space is believed to be pre-verbal, unfettered by theory and scientific experimentation. This point is consistent with Husserl's (1970/1936) view of the pre-given, the already-there world, or the world in which humans are born. Congruently, Sartre (1993/1943) suggests that the body is an 'inapprehensible given' in the sense that it is intrinsic to one's first act of being (burst-in-to-life). For Sartre, the most primitive consciousness entails spatiality, notes Greene (1983). The body, which at once is a part of the world and, at the same time, is that which has consciousness, is one's first and original connection to the world. Sartre's understanding of the constant

relationship between the body and one's consciousness suggests that the individual transcends space by reflecting on what he experiences.

For van Manen (1990) lived space refers to the landscape in which people move and in which they might consider themselves at home. It has to do with the way in which individuals experience the affairs of day-to-day existence. Home is where "*we can be what we are*" (p. 102). Merleau-Ponty (1962/2003) also addresses the concept of spatiality. For him, it pertains to circumstance; "it is a spatiality of orientation towards a possible world" (Hyde, 2005, p. 33). In this view, it is possible for an individual to be physically located within a particular geometrical or geographical space, but be imagining, day-dreaming, or longing to be somewhere else, oriented towards some other space. This might typically occur when an individual feels homesick or longs to be with a loved one from whom he is physically separated by distance.

The concept of home as a defining element in van Manen's (1990) description of the lived space deserves a brief discussion as it relates to the participants in this study. Seven fathers report that they immigrated without the goal of settling in the U.S. permanently. Others report feelings of loss and longing for their home country. A few fathers and their children hope to return to Mexico. Among several of them it is clear that they would have not left their families unless they really had to do so. Thus, a few appropriate questions that promote further inquiry are: What does home mean to these fathers? If they consider the U.S. their home today, can they be what they are (as suggested by van Manen)? Do they have the freedom to be what they are? With what type of poverty is easier to live, the one left in Mexico or the one found here?

Heidegger (1962/1936) highlights the interrelatedness that exists between spatiality and individuals and suggests that there is a relationship between human beings and space in so far as they are endowed with the ability to 'abolish distance' or what he referred to as being able to engage in 'de-severance.' To abolish distance

implies 'to bring something close by,' and involves being able to utilize what there is at hand, to move about in the world, and to understand what exists in this world by using it without having to reflect upon it. Related to de-severance is the way in which individuals find themselves in-the-world. De-severance and being-in-the-world are characteristics of human beings that speak of their intimate connection with the environment. Heidegger's views of space and place mark a new beginning in the history of philosophy. It is often claimed that Heidegger's attention to spatiality represents a mid-point between body and mind, both of which are cast aside in order to concentrate on what happens between them (Wollan, 2004).

For these fathers, being-in-the-world is ultimately a demanding endeavor. It requires a great deal of insight as well as foresight, which they display from pre-migration to family reunion and re-settlement. In fact, their ability to recognize that they cannot fulfill the fathering role unless they cross the border, and their courage to acknowledge what they sacrifice by living in the U.S., as suggested by *the other poverty* and *the border inside*, are testimony to their ability to abolish distance with the real world and themselves. Further, they transcend the limitations of the environment by reflecting on their experiences. From Heidegger's (1962/1936) vantage point, what unfolds between body and mind among these fathers is the recognition of their commitment to the family, their courage; a lived space in which vulnerability and helplessness also manifest.

The Realm in which All is Felt (corporeality)

The duality of the lived and the corporeal body has been deeply explored by the phenomenological tradition, especially by Merleau-Ponty (1962/2003). The lived body represents not only the felt body, or the subjective space of bodily sensations. It includes also the individual's pre-reflective experience as a whole, insofar as it is suggested by the medium of the body, by its senses and limbs. The individual acts through his body,

perceives and exists with it, without necessarily reflecting on it. Thus, *lived bodiliness* (corporeality) refers to the individual's relationship to the world as mediated and lived by the body, or the *embodied* being-in-the-world (Fuchs, 2003). On the other hand, the corporeal body is also the anatomical and organic object as described by physiology which can be observed and touched. However, the union of mind and body becomes a means of experiencing and so it does away with the idea of a subjective and objective world (Munhall, 2007). Moreover, for Merleau-Ponty (1962/2003), bodily existence is also projective. This projection is part of an intersubjective dialogue between the one who experiences lived bodiliness and the world (Sullivan, 1997).

Sartre's (1993/1943) idea of corporeality is connected to the individual's awareness of being observed and how such experience influences one's self-concept. Sartre's concern is not with the other's eyes, but the gaze *behind* those eyes; the consciousness that threatens to organize an individual into his world. Therefore, through another's consciousness, the individual discovers his body and place in the world. Further, Sartre suggests that the individual's relationship with others is a transaction between consciousnesses, one that involves the experience of the feeling of being looked-at (Greene, 1972). An individual can be aware of others and their perception of him even when they are nowhere in sight. This view of corporeality can be interpreted in two different ways. If one perceives 'the other' as the Mexican father's family and kin, and support sources in the U.S., then the other's gaze acts as an encouraging force that promotes a healthy self-concept. If 'the other' is understood as certain aspects of U.S. society that pose a threat to the survival of the father and his family, then the relationship between consciousnesses results in a self-concept that – despite its resilience – is nonetheless vulnerable. Even when 'the other' is not in sight, he is present in the form of safety being threatened by the awareness of raids and deportations.

Taking into consideration Merleau-Ponty's (1962/2003) understanding of the lived body as the realm of bodily sensations and knowing the world through one's own body, the investigator holds that the father's lived bodiliness equips him with the ability to know about his children's poverty, hunger, and despair because he knows them with his body as well. He knows what an empty stomach feels like. Through his intending toward his children and by projecting his corporeality onto them, he is able to know how his children's bodies feel. In other words, he knows about their hunger because he knows his. He knows what hunger means to him. He knows what it means to his children. He knows where worry is felt in his body. He knows where in their bodies his children feel it. He knows where in his body the fear of arrest and deportation are felt. Because he wants to protect his children from such lived bodiliness, he often chooses not to tell his children that they are living in hiding.

As claimed by Heidegger (1962/1936), being-in-the-world entails closeness with the environment; thus, corporeality also fulfills the function of defining identity by virtue of one's own relationship with the social context. From this vantage point, the lived body of the Mexican immigrant father represents a well of information on which to build his self-regard based on feedback from his transactions with the social context. And so, departing to the U.S. without his family ascribes to him several identities based on the relationships he leaves behind, only if temporarily. Crossing the border and settling in the U.S. are first-time face-to-face experiences with a new culture. He is bombarded with epithets that range from the least to the most brutal. Supporting the family from a distance and in loneliness, and parenting his children – even if only over the telephone – cause feelings of pride and satisfaction, not unlike the joy of family reunion. Living in hiding makes him a 'felon,' so he hides and lives as a fugitive. From Mexico to the U.S., these transactions with others and the social context are imprinted in his body only to be unlocked by awareness and language. There is no description in the interviews

suggesting that the phenomenon of cross-border fathering in the sample evokes feelings of regret or failure. However, that is not an indication that those feelings will not emerge later. As Sokolowski (2000) notes: “as the ego identifies the things in the world and its own body, it also continuously identifies itself” (p. 126).

Merleau-Ponty (1962/2003) also highlights the role of corporeality as what this investigator calls ‘the organic journal.’ One of the most relevant aspects of corporeality is the way in which memories are stored in the body. While a memory remains stored, it is entirely chemical and organic; however, when it is activated it becomes part of the transcendental life again. Moments of transcendence are observed during the interviews when fathers allow themselves to be emotionally vulnerable with the investigator. As they engage in de-severance with their minds and also the investigator, their memories are activated and released by their bodies in the shape of powerful emotions, such as sadness, withdrawal, worry, fear, and also hope and satisfaction. This organic journal – the body that speaks – is filled with memories, and is shared during the interviews.

Fathering Times (temporality)

As opposed to scientific time, which always assumes a spatial representation, human or *lived time* (temporality) is not fixed or regular, and is more appropriately described as flowing in an episodic and inhomogeneous way. Human time, notes Dapkus Chapman (1997), “is lively and irregular and experientially distinct from metric time” (p. 100). Considering that all action takes place in the present, both past and future must be constructed. The past changes under the influences of the present time.

Although contemporary civilization perceives time in linear terms, as a line coming from the past and going into the future through the present, a more appropriate description is that past and future are so only in the present; that is, brought to the present by consciousness. Husserl (1980/1913) introduces the concept of ‘inner consciousness of time,’ which is experienced as a continuously moving pattern. Events

take place only against the entire world of the individual and his ways of dealing with it. Every event is related to what has gone and what is desired or hoped that will come. In other words, for Husserl, there is no present because time is constantly arriving and departing. With the arrival of every moment, the experience of all other moments is changed.

For Heidegger (1977), there is no present, and time is not a succession of events. He perceives the present as a function of the future. For him, to exist in the world means “to be in possession of the gift of being but only on borrowed time; it means to be able to lease it, but with the constant threat of sudden expropriation” (Bielik-Robson, 2000, p. 71). This future orientation makes each event of what is ordinarily called ‘the past’ assume its relationship to a future which then becomes a present mode of experiencing it. Time emerges episodically, with the most significant changes taking place from the future to the past, both of which situate the individual in the present. This perception of time creates a dependency on time, and it becomes a source of overwhelming ontological insecurity, anxiety, and despair. This view supports the idea that *Dasein* (a being conscious of the meaning of its own existence) exists as thrown-being towards its end (Hanlon, 2004), on an existential thrust into his own destiny and death. Similar to Heidegger’s concept of lived time, for Sartre (1993/1943) the past exists as an object in the present, while the future is constructed by using the past as its language. Thus, in his view, the present does not exist because one is always ahead of oneself in terms of the events that lie behind (Ihde & Silverman, 1985).

This perception carries with it a sense of urgency and the fear of losing or wasting time. It is not unlike such questions as: Will I be able to have children before I turn 40? Will I graduate from college next year? Will I be able to retire before the age of 65? This anxiety is apparent in the first theme discussed, namely, *crossing to be able to be a father*, when several fathers reported feeling ‘desperate’ and robbed of the

opportunity of becoming a father. Their perceived roles as breadwinners and their inability to fulfill them evoke the preoccupation with the passing of time as if they were 'running out of time,' as if they were asking themselves 'will I be able to save my children before it is too late?' This worry does not end once the father is settled with his family in the U.S. Other concerns arise such as the fear that – for one reason or another – he might lose his job; he and his family might be deported; losing everything he now considers home and having to start all over again in Mexico. Thus, these worries trigger questions such as: Will my child be able to finish school this year? Will we be still here in Christmas? Will our child be born here, or will we be deported before? The father wonders: How long will this last? In sum, the fear of running out of time is an existential element of cross-border fathering. In Heidegger's (1977) view, the passing of time brings individuals closer to their death everyday; a perception that compels them to build the foundations of the present in function of the future. In other words, individuals are not in the present but already in the future; building a present to have a future. Although this conflict might create more helplessness, it appears also that for these fathers it becomes a challenge that brings possibility and creates opportunities that they seize at once.

For Merleau-Ponty (2003/1962), it is in the present that being and consciousness coincide. Merleau-Ponty relies on this co-incidence to point out that the stream of consciousness and the stream of time are closely related, and that both are situated in the world. Whereas it is a fact that individuals can know themselves through reflection on the past or in some idea of the future, they are inevitably situated in some present. "The present is that point on which past, future, and present turn; time is not a line running from left to right but a network of changing meaning" notes Dapkus Chapman (1997, p. 104). Core themes such as *the border inside*, *the other poverty* and *the ultimate sacrifice* speak of the conjuncture of reality and reflection at which point the father assesses what he hoped for and what it is, and what he gained and what he lost. In this sense, it is in

the present that meaningful existential questions are likely to arise such as: Am I a good father? Was it all worthy? Did I become the father I wanted to be? Did I make things better or worse for my children by coming here? Do I have any regrets? How satisfied am I? Am I free? Who am I?

The Thread of Connectedness (relationality)

Lived other (relationality) refers to the *lived relation* that individuals maintain with others in the interpersonal space they share. When two individuals meet, they approach one another in a corporeal way through their senses and are able to develop a conversational relation that allows them to transcend themselves (van Manen, 2000). Such transcendence of oneself would not be possible without another with whom to relate. As Tacey (2003) notes: the self only comes to know itself in relationship with the other. This view is somewhat consistent with Heidegger's (1962/1936) claim that an ability to 'abolish distance' is necessary for being-in-the-world, and Sartre's (1993/1943) view of the self-concept as a result of the 'other's gaze'. Therefore, in order to be-in-the-world, one must partake with it by engaging with others. Such membership and participation are part of the pre-given traits of the life-world in Latin America.

The roles of familism and kin in Mexican culture are fundamental. They could not manifest and thrive as they do in predominantly individualistic societies without experiencing some type of modification. Collectivism is the paradigm upon which familism grows. The major themes of collectivism are self-definition as part of a group, subordination of personal goals to in-group goals, concern for the integrity of the in-group, and intense emotional attachment to the group (Triandis, Bontempo, & Villareal, 1988). In collectivist cultures, it is the system who achieves or fails (as opposed to the individual), people feel proud of their group's achievement, and interdependence is seen in terms of duty, obligation, and morality. This interdependence and loyalty help understand how core themes such *the other poverty* and the *border inside* negatively

affect family relations, and perhaps relationships among *parientes* (relatives). It is likely that differences might also manifest among relatives when some are documented or born in the U.S. while others are not; therefore, the border inside extends far beyond the father's home but into blood relations.

Inspired by the views of Karl Marx, Sartre (1993/1943) acknowledges how socio-economic conditions determine social relations; how they impinge on the individual and the community (Flynn, 2004). In Sartre's view, an individual's sense of identity (and worth) is constituted as a function of the other's projection and not as something that he can make himself be. In this sense, the word 'Mexican' carries with it a host of associations constructed by others, ranging from the most empathic to the most hostile. Social relations take place not only between individuals, but also between and within institutions that have developed historically and foster relations of power and domination (Crowell, 2004). Thus, the Mexican immigrant father and his family, depending on their immigration status, experience various degrees of identity and self-worth as the result of the projections from others onto them. These differences, in turn, have the potential to engender power differentials among family members, relatives, friends, etc. making the community less cohesive and more vulnerable to oppression.

The *border inside*, or the invisible boundary within the family that differentiates between the eligible and the non-eligible siblings often does the same between children and parents as evidenced in the sample. This divide is becoming more visible among immigrant families. It has been amply documented that children of immigrants are the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. population under age 18 (Van Hook & Fix, 2000). One in five children in the U.S. is the child of an immigrant. In addition, one in four low-income children is an immigrant's child (Fix, Zimmermann, & Passel, 2001). In 2003, more than 20% of children living in the U.S. had at least one foreign-born parent. These estimates are compelling illustrations of the invisible demarcation that exists within the

immigrant family as a result of family members' differences based on eligibility and access to resources such as medical care, employment, and education; differences that lay a barbwire between siblings and also between parents and their children, changing relationships forever. The evidence suggests that these fathers are able to assess the costs and benefits of these conflicts by focusing on, emphasizing, and celebrating their accomplishments, which are stated as feelings of pride and satisfaction when discussing their children's academic opportunities and achievements.

For Levinas (1981), the phenomenological significance of relationality lies in a person's encounter with the presence of another person and his ability to recognize the appeal made by the other. Because the destiny of a loved one, especially a child, is experienced to be somehow in one's hands, it is not surprising that sacrifice and kin are believed to be closely tied. Myers (1983) believes that self-sacrifice is an indicator of kinship solidarity, a type of morality characterized by kindness and a predisposition to love and care for others. These fathers often choose to forego their own needs in the interest of their children. As revealed by *the ultimate sacrifice*, self-sacrifice is a strength. It is also a trait indisputably manifested among all family members old enough to give something of themselves. Sacrifice becomes a family endeavor. This view of self-concept in relation to others is typical of Latin American culture (Altshuler & Schmutz, 2006), perhaps nowadays more evident in small communities rather than large metropolitan areas.

The discussion of findings undertaken above, drawn upon van Manen's (1990) concept of the four life-world existentials (spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and relationality) takes the interpretation of findings a step beyond the process of phenomenological reduction. It attempts to explore and describe the ways in which the philosophical views of Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, and van Manen might have articulated the phenomenon of cross-border fathering and the themes that emerge

from the interviews. It is evident that, as the existential reflection continues, further questions arise, taking this study into a realm of more unknowing and curiosity.

Epoche: An Endless Process

The investigator espouses the view that knowledge is achieved in the interpretation and understanding of the expressions of human life (Sharkey, 2001). In this lens, the investigator intends towards the several lived experiences shared by these men and is attentive to the complex phenomenon of cross-border fathering. For this to have occurred and continue to occur, it is fundamental to acknowledge the role of intuition in this seemingly last step in the discussion of findings. For Husserl (1980/1913), the self is an intuitive-thinking being, one who doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wishes for or against, senses, and imagines. For the investigator, the intuitive-thinking process required that he confront face-to-face his preconceived notions about these men's lived experiences to cast aside every possible intrusive and non-belonging-to-the-phenomenon thoughts. In other words, this process required he engage again and again in Epoche; thus, the previous claim that this was a *seemingly* last step along the interpretation of findings. The reflective process knows no end.

Ironically, this stance shows the parallel between the phenomenon under study and the process of interpretation because both may be perceived as non-linear phenomena, much like the concept of temporality espoused by Dapkus-Chapman (1997), which describes the present as a network of evolving meaning. In phenomenology, time is not seen as a static object. Neither is perception. Similarly, meaning is seen by the investigator as enhanced or augmented with every return to the data or with every feedback received by devil's advocates and external auditors. Meaning is fluid and alive; therefore, with every new angle, it is enhancing, augmenting, evolving, expanding, unfolding and so on.

This study is carried out taking into account that the essence of an experience is never completely exhausted and that the fundamental textural-structural synthesis merely represents the essence at a particular time and place, as observed from the vantage point of an investigator following an intuitive and reflective study of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). In this light, it is safe to suggest that a different cohort, location, time, and investigator would have resulted in a different experience. The degree of difference is arguable and such topic opens the door to stimulating dialogue on epistemological considerations in qualitative research. Nonetheless, the findings of this study lead the investigator – by virtue of the processes of inquiry, analysis, synthesis, and triangulation – to the identification of nine core themes that emerged from the data, the essence of cross-border fathering, and a discussion of these findings through hermeneutical reflection, and from different phenomenological existential views.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the moment at which the first question of the interview protocol was asked elicited a flood of memories in each participant that transported him back to the moment he first entertained the idea of crossing the border and leaving his family behind. Such a question, namely “Today, you are living in a country other than your home country. How did the idea of migrating to the U.S. first arise?” always proved to be fruitful in several ways for it gave participant and investigator the opportunity to engage in what Munhall (2007) calls the ‘existential interaction’ or the ongoing interaction with the existential processing of phenomenological material, which entails that the investigator must be “in transaction with persons in interviews and conversations and need to develop the consciousness of one who does not know” (p. 167). Not only did the first question yield relevant data about the phenomenon but it also set the stage for the rest of the interview. Without being aware of it, each participant became a co-investigator.

Participants' preoccupation with their inability to engage in effective fathering as a result of lack of opportunities in Mexico surfaces in all interviews. Fathers struggle to transform empty intentions (the idea of fathering) into filled intentions (the realization of fathering). There is ample evidence in their descriptions to suggest that the experiences of fathering and immigration go hand-in-hand, intertwine, and support one another to such extent that one cannot exist without the other for as long as they remain in the U.S. Both experiences comprise the fathers' lived time, their temporality. Significant fathering efforts are observed in pre-migration times when the father struggles to support his family until he decides to leave. Similar efforts manifest during family resettlement and residence in the U.S. when the struggle changes from economic poverty to emotional poverty, and so the fathers' relationality is threatened by the presence of two countries within his home, a new kind of poverty, and ongoing sacrifice.

Horizons drawn from the data obtained during the first interview make it clear that the Mexican immigrant father treads along a series of steps involved in the phenomenon of cross-border fathering. The stories that surface from the first interview evoke a storyline similar to the migration continuum that has been described by several scholars such as Conway (1980), Drachman (1992), Jasso and Rosenzweig (1986), and Lamm and Imhoff (1985). However, these fathers' lived experiences, their being-in-the-world, cannot be understood piecemeal, as a combination or succession of events. The steps involved in cross-border fathering are many. As it has been discussed before, the life-world of the father is understood within the existential context of lived space, lived body, lived time, and lived human relations. The life-worlds of these Mexican immigrant fathers are neither sequential nor static. Phenomenologically speaking, they unfold constantly evolve within a network of endless geographical, sociopolitical, and emotional borders that they cross back-and-forth each day, stepping into the field of possibility, and seizing every opportunity that becomes available.

Implications of the Findings

Within this existential framework, a logical next step is to look at fathering as informed by social conventions. The investigator contends that such conventions invariably contribute to the restlessness or angst that fathers have come to feel, especially in the U.S. in recent years. Men's (and women's) lives as caregivers and earners are impacted by deeply-seated moral and social scripts that prescribe what they should do in and outside the home (Berk, 1985; Coltrane, 1989; Doucet, 2006). Further, they have been affected by changes in family structures and dynamics observed all over the world as a result of globalization and increased social inequality. However, the most salient phenomenon in the American family in the last two decades is the high number of female headed families, especially among African Americans and Latinos (Stern, 1997). This change in family structure came to the forefront of the socio-political context in the last decades of the twentieth century. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, it is not surprising that titles such as *Fatherless America* (Blankenhorn, 1996) and *Life without Father* (Popenoe, 1999) appeared in the American vernacular, reflecting research findings from the 1980s and 1990s which focused on the negative effects of father absence on child development. Likewise, President Clinton's commitment to "end welfare as we know it" resulted in the *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA)*, which included provisions that strengthened child support laws and gave power to child support enforcement agencies to sanction non-payers. Since then, a deficit model of men and a role inadequacy perspective (RIP) of fathering have polluted the scholarly and clinical work on fathering (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997).

As discussed earlier, pathological views of Mexican fathers in general abound. When they are coupled with American paradigms to understand fathering, the Mexican immigrant father faces a double challenge, much like fighting a double-headed dragon. The oppressive forces generated by the juxtaposition of male gender and

Latino/Mexican ethnicity is not unlike the one faced by African American men who have been victimized with negative stereotypes, ranging from absent and uninvolved to irresponsible and dead beat dads. By returning to the definitions of fathering discussed in Chapter One, namely: (1) parental investment is understood as “any investment by the parent in an individual offspring that increases the offspring’s chance of surviving” (Trivers, 1972, p. 139); and (2) the premise that paternal involvement is comprised of *paternal engagement*, or direct interaction with the child in the form of caretaking or play; *accessibility*, or being available for the child; and *responsibility*, or making sure that the child is well taken care of and locating resources for the child (Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine, 1985), the investigator contends that the Mexican immigrant father succeeds in the fulfillment of his role of father.

The evidence suggests that these fathers invest more than they had ever imagined they would. Not unlike millions of parents, their investment often becomes sacrifice. They sacrifice one-on-one time with their children and spouses. When their families face danger while crossing the border or while fearing deportation from the U.S., these fathers sacrifice their children’s lives in order to save them. This is one of the major findings of this study.

Direct interaction with the child ranges from face-to-face interaction both in Mexico and in the U.S. The period of separation may also be perceived as a moment of direct interaction because, although maintaining a relationship across the border, fathering efforts comprise more than providing. They also include relating with their children in various ways and ensuring the survival of the parent-child bond. Despite the distance and the time that elapses between the father’s departure and family reunion, he demonstrates to be available for the child. This is carried out to the extent that the father is a reliable source of support for the child even if he is homeless, as reflected in the triangulated data; if he is sick, as in the case of Father Six; or when approaching the age

of 60 and having adult children, as in the case of Father Five. It is evident across the sample that the Mexican immigrant father displays a genuine sense of responsibility. Having crossed the border and continuing to cross several borders in the U.S. today are a strong testimony to his devotion to his children.

Overall, the field of fatherhood and fathering has been highly atheoretical. In regard to models that conceptualize and measure father involvement, the existing frameworks are based mostly on Anglo-European middle-class samples (Cabrera et al., 2000). Whether these models capture the experience of Latino fathers is arguable. From this vantage point, it is unlikely that there exists any model that could successfully measure father involvement among Mexican immigrant fathers. Such paucity of research represents an open door to the scholarly community. This study, although ambitious, is but a humble beginning, an invitation to begin unraveling the phenomenon. It is the investigator's belief that the phenomenon of cross-border fathering will become more prominent in the next years not only among individuals from Mexico but from other nations. Furthermore, cross-border mothering needs to be regarded with the same attention.

Findings from this study have implications for the field of social work. Practitioners must become knowledgeable about the experience of fatherhood among immigrant fathers and the compounding effects of migration upon fathering tasks and family relationships. The following discussion on this study's implications for practice, education, and policy is guided by both the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) *Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS)*, and the National Association of Social Workers' (NASW) *Code of Ethics*. Both sets of guidelines lay the foundations for higher learning and social workers' ethical professional conduct, respectively.

Implications for Practice

Prior to the beginning of this study, it was the investigator's assumption that the worst danger known to these individuals involved crossing the Mexico-U.S. border. The data show that – oftentimes – the most challenging tasks surface once the father arrives, and during family reunion and resettlement. Once settled in the U.S., other threats are known for the first time, namely; economic and emotional/relational poverty, helplessness, and the fear of being deported and losing all which the father and his family, especially his children, regard as theirs. Mexican immigrant family members, both adults and children, might come to neighborhood centers, schools, and hospitals, and community mental health centers showing symptoms of psychological stress and in need of assistance from social workers to help them meet their basic needs. They might present with family problems ranging from family violence to substance use. They might also seek legal advice and advocacy. Children might display noticeable behavior problems and academic challenges in school. Mexican immigrants' access to health services is minimal. Despite the contribution they make to the U.S. economy, public policies tend to restrict or completely exclude them from access to several needed resources. In 2003, more than half of Mexican immigrants were reported as having no medical coverage (52.6%), a higher proportion than that found among other immigrant groups from Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole (36.7%), and much higher than the ratio immigrants from other parts of the world (Consejo Nacional de Población [Conapo], 2004).

As the Mexican immigrant father and his family present as consumers of services, professionals must provide such services on a strong ethical ground. According to CSWE (2001), three of the purposes of the social work profession that pertain to direct service are:

- To enhance human well-being and alleviate poverty, oppression, and other forms of social injustice.
- To enhance the social functioning and interaction of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities by involving them in accomplishing goals, developing resources, and preventing and alleviating distress.
- To develop and apply practice in the context of diverse cultures. (p. 4)

Although Berry (1991) claims that acculturation may result in personal growth and insight, its negative mental health outcomes have long been documented. It is not unlikely for the Mexican immigrant father to present in mental health settings with Depressive Disorder, Anxiety, or Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), stemming from the experience of crossing the border and near-death situations, feelings of guilt, and hypervigilance from living in fear of deportation and complete loss. Further, his family members might exhibit similar symptoms. Fathers who participated in this study report to have been in the U.S. on average for ten years. However, many Mexican fathers are recent immigrants. The tasks of fathering in the U.S. might involve relying on cultural-ethnic expectations and roles based on what they used to do 'back home,' while at the same time incorporating into these schemata the expectations and values of American culture (Cabrera & Garcia Coll, 2004), which creates a clash of cultures in the home, compounded by situations created by *the border inside* and *the other poverty*.

Acculturation, which for quite some time has been articulated as a universal and linear process in the literature, needs to be understood as a more complicated and personal process. It has been demonstrated that not all families, regardless of their country of origin, acculturate the same way (Fuligni, 1998; Fuligni & Yoshikawa, 2002; Sabogal, Marin, & Otero-Sabogal, 1987). Migration, notes Falicov (2005), changes many family dynamics, particularly as a result of family disruptions and reunion among family

members. Reincorporation of family members into the family is often a painful experience for the entire system (Suarez-Orozco, Todorova, & Louie, 2001). A moment to which the father looked forward early in his journey becomes a new struggle whether it involves the wife or the children who are experiencing difficulty with their arrival and settlement. Across the sample, this transition was observed among wives (i.e.: feelings of isolation) and children (i.e.: academic problems), but mostly among wives. These and other challenges might be disclosed in the clinician's office when fathers, wives, children, or the entire family seeks professional help, which in many cases might not happen before the family exhausts their resources within the safe network of their culture and community.

It goes without saying that the emphasis on Evidence-Based Practices (EBP) will continue to dictate interventions in the years to come. Although there is increasing consensus on the need to rely on "conscientious, judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individuals" (Sackett, Robinson, Rosenberg, & Haynes, 1997) as opposed to clinical wisdom, intuition, and eclecticism, other paradigms need to be explored and taken into account when developing interventions as well as programs. It is known that several immigrant and refugee groups in the U.S. first rely on folk medicine before considering modern medicine. Similarly, theories and interventions developed on middle-class Caucasian families or other ethnic groups might not hold true in the life-world of the Mexican immigrant father and his family.

Public and mental health systems need to assure a broad array of available culturally acceptable treatment modalities. This is instrumental when considering appropriate services for Latinos. In fact, the Hispanic Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (HHANES), relying on a nationwide probability sample of approximately 16,000 Mexican individuals, six months-74 years of age, across five Southwestern states, found that only 4% of the participants reported consulting a *curandero* (healer), *herbalista*

(herbalist) or other folk medicine practitioner within the prior 12 months (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC]. National Center for Health Statistics, 2004). However, studies of smaller groups of Mexicans indicate that proportions ranging from 7 to 44% of the sample use *curanderos* and other folk healers (Macias & Morales, 2000). Furthermore, the use of folk remedies appears to be more common than consultation with a folk healer. Usually, these remedies are used to complement mainstream health care (Pachter, Cloutier, & Berstein, 1995). Services need to be provided to individuals and families, regardless of immigration status, insurance coverage, and language.

Although the Mexican immigrant population is relatively young compared to other ethnic groups (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004), the well-being of aging Mexican immigrant fathers will be a concern in the next few decades. Ethnicity, culture, and minority status are associated with high rates of mental disorder and health issues among the elderly population (Black, 2000). Traditionally, Mexican elderly are less likely to live in a home for the aged and more likely to live in a home comprised of a few generations (Cubillos & Prieto, 1987). A major task faced by elderly immigrants is that of coming to terms with their immigration experiences. According to Potocky-Tripodi (2002), “if this task is not successfully negotiated, these individuals are at risk for falling into despair of depression” (p. 352). Anticipating the aging of Mexican immigrant fathers, significant attention must be given to systems that will need to be in place to address their needs.

Implications for Research and Education

As evidenced in journal articles and other types of publications, the growing body of theory and research on immigrant and refugee issues is beginning to become more significant in a world that is more in touch with a global perspective of the human experience. However, stereotypes about immigrants and – in particular – Mexican immigrant men still persist in both academia and practice, despite efforts to promote students’ and professionals’ interest and learning about diverse populations.

Consciously or not, both lay persons and professionals still hold biased views of immigrant populations, views that often develop into intolerance and incompetent service delivery, potentially compromising the dignity and worth of the individual, the importance of human relationships, and the client's well-being. In order to avoid situations that unintentionally put clients at risk, available and effective clinical and field supervision are fundamental.

This being stated, universities and instructors alike need to foster critical thinking among students as well as stimulate an interest in worldviews other than those prescribed by positivistic paradigms or espoused by American and European perspectives. In order to capture the evolving experience of Mexican immigrants, students and practitioners need to display the ability to think globally, consider significant variations among individuals, and contribute to the development of new theories and research that will hopefully characterize the realm of social sciences in the twentieth-first century. As it has been discussed, the phenomenon under study is complex and multifold. Therefore, research studies and interventions drawn upon the concept of father absenteeism, abandonment, or uninvolved fathers will not apply to population groups similar to this cohort. Those Mexican immigrant fathers who participate in this investigation display an array of conscious efforts to remain involved and present in their children's lives despite the geographical distance. The investigator contends that this is not a parenting experience exclusive to Mexican fathers or fathers in general. There is evidence to support the fact that, increasingly, Mexican women are immigrating alone (Falicov, 2005).

It is incumbent upon social work educators to guide students as early as possible in their educational experience to become more knowledgeable of cultural diversity beyond Hispanic and non-Hispanic paradigms. In fact, with the majority of immigrants in this country having their origin in Mexico, it becomes almost necessarily urgent to foster

learning on Mexican culture, the sequelae of emigration in Mexico, and the effects of immigration on the individual and the family. These endeavors become an academic necessity if prospective social work professionals are going to practice in contemporary U.S. society. Curricula must avidly focus on the experience of immigrants and refugees; not only on those who immigrate to the U.S. but also about mass movements of people worldwide and the relevance of international social work practice and international social welfare.

These implications are congruent with the following purposes of social work education as outlined by CSWE (2001, p. 4):

- To prepare competent and effective professionals
- To develop social work knowledge
- To provide leadership in the development of service delivery systems
- To enable students to integrate the knowledge, values, and skills of the profession for competent practice
- To develop and use research, knowledge, and skills that advance social work practice

Consistent with curricula that address social welfare, social justice, at-risk populations and cultural diversity, the experience of the Mexican immigrant father and his family must be integrated to lectures and student group activities. Students might better understand the mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and apply theoretical frameworks that promote the discovery of strengths and the development of culturally sensitive assessments and interventions with this population group.

Implications for Policy

A startling estimate by Pew Hispanic Center is that “one in every six undocumented migrants is a child, accounting for 1.7 million of the more than 10 million undocumented migrants” (Passel, 2005, p. 3). Inevitably, this fact brings back the

evocation of the border inside and the inequality that has settled within the Mexican immigrant family. In 2003, more than 20% of children living in the U.S. had at least one foreign-born parent. Of this group of children, 16.5% were born in the U.S. and four percent were themselves foreign-born. Children with foreign-born parents are more likely than children with native-born parents to have family incomes below 100% of the Federal poverty level. Health insurance coverage also varies by nativity: native-born children with foreign-born parents are more likely to have public insurance, while foreign-born children with foreign-born parents are the most likely to be uninsured (CDC, National Centers for Health Statistics, 2003). These numbers are also a warning sign of the social and health challenges to be overcome in the near future, especially if immigration policies do not address the needs of millions of immigrants living on the margins of society.

Immigration policies and raids targeting undocumented immigrants have an irreversible effect on the welfare of children. A significant increase in interior immigration enforcement operations by the Department of Homeland Security has been observed within approximately the last two years. In 2007, according to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), more than 4,900 arrests were made in connection with worksite enforcement investigations, representing a 45-fold increase in criminal worksite arrests compared to fiscal year 2001 (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), 2008). The impact of these raids on children is often disregarded and poorly understood (Capps, Castaneda, Chaudry, & Santos, 2007; National Council of La Raza (NCLR), 2007). It is appropriate to anticipate that more undocumented children will come to the attention of Child Protective Services as a result of parents' arrest and deportation, especially when no relatives can take on the responsibility of their care.

Due to the federal government's failure to pass comprehensive immigration reform, several states and localities are taking the lead in immigration regulation.

Traditionally, states have been involved in restricting immigrants' access to health care, licenses, and public benefits. However, in recent months an increasing number of states and localities are seeking to drive unwanted immigrants out of their communities and make it less hospitable for new immigrants to arrive. Over the last few years, legislation has been introduced at the state and city levels, which included language that would cut benefits to immigrants, penalize persons who employ or provide assistance and services to undocumented immigrants, and require the police to enforce immigration laws. The state of Indiana is no exception. State Bill 335 is a good example of this trend. The implications for Mexican immigrants are vast and these measures create intolerance, mistrust, discrimination, and fear in U.S. communities (Murguía, 2008).

The U.S. government can no longer ignore the growing presence of Mexican immigrants in social, economic, political, and cultural arenas. However, the same can be said about the Mexican government in regard to the exodus of its citizens to the U.S. and the impact that such void has on its society. According to Castles and Delgado Wise (2008), one-third of Mexican municipalities are now facing depopulation and economic decline as a result of emigration. Mexican immigrants make significant contributions to the U.S. economy by providing a labor force. They also stimulate the Mexican economy as a result of remittances sent by immigrants to their families in Mexico. Because the Mexican exodus is unlikely to be deterred by building a fence or deploying military forces to the border, any relevant policy implementation to address the needs of these immigrants needs to be undertaken by both nations in the near future. Therefore, there must be: (1) bilateral cooperation to addresses the root causes of migration instead of focusing exclusively on issues of national security; (2) full respect for the labor and human rights of workers; (3) an alternative development model for Mexico, instead of relying heavily on a cheap labor export model; (4) protection of human and labor rights of migrants through all possible channels; and (5) writing and enacting public policies to

work in parallel with immigrants' initiatives, assets, and needs (Delgado Wise & Márquez Covarrubias, 2008).

Finally, as it pertains to Mexican immigrant fathers' involvement with their children, this study shows that they remain involved in their children's lives despite the geographical distance between Mexico and the U.S. and the emotional distance created by *the other poverty* and *the border inside*. As already discussed, fathering efforts are displayed in several meaningful and productive ways. Therefore, state and federal policies adhering to deficit views on fathers do not apply to the Mexican immigrant father and his experience of cross-border fathering.

Limitations of the Study

Each one of the themes that emerges from the data represents an open door to many worlds of inquiry in the fields of social work, nursing, counseling, and so on. The voluminous data and the findings reported in thick description invite scholars, professionals, and students to ask many questions and learn more about these fathers and their families. Not unlike any research study, this one is also subject to limitations.

First of all, there are limitations in regard to sampling procedures. This study relies on a considerably small purposeful sample size: 15 Mexican immigrant fathers who have experienced the phenomenon of cross-border fathering. Although recruitment efforts targeted several sectors of the community, they were carried out mostly in areas that are likely to be frequented by low-income Mexican families. Therefore, these findings cannot be transferred to middle- and upper-class individuals, professionals who immigrated with student visas or work permits, and those who immigrated for reasons other than the necessity to rise above poverty and be able to fulfill their perceived roles as fathers. Because it is assumed by the investigator that all those who participated were biological fathers and no issues pertaining to sexual orientation were discussed, this study unintentionally excludes adoptive fathers, gay fathers, and stepfathers.

Further, the age of the participants ranges from 29 to 56 years, excluding younger and adolescent fathers as well as grandfathers raising grandchildren, therefore, acting as fathers.

Second, limitations about the range of the phenomenon under study must be considered. Although issues pertaining to the relationship between the father and his wife, and the father and his children manifest in the data and are discussed by the investigator, it is understood that the study focuses primarily on the lived experience of the father. Therefore, there is insufficient information revealed about the wife and the children. These are foci for other promising studies. Considering the increasing number of mothers who immigrate alone, the phenomenon of cross-border mothering must also be explored. Several aspects of the phenomenon are corroborated by both the literature review and the triangulated data, which simultaneously warrant further research when considering that certain situations identified by the literature and discussed in the triangulated data did not manifest during the interviews.

Third, there are limitations pertaining to the relationship between the investigator and the fathers. The investigator consciously engaged in self-awareness and adopted an attitude of not-knowing when meeting with participants and during the treatment of data in order to bracket pre-conceived notions and biases about this group. However, he acknowledges that bracketing all pre-existing knowledge about the participants is virtually impossible. Because he invested a great deal of cognitive and emotional effort to maintain his clinical skills outside the field of the interview, it is possible that such attitude could have discouraged participants from sharing more information than they did.

Fourth, the length of time between certain events and the moment in which they are recalled by the fathers deserves attention. The average length of U.S. residence among the participants is 10 years. It is possible to entertain the idea that these fathers'

memories might have been eroded and distorted over such long period of time in which – based on the data – many significant events take place. Rubin and Rubin (1995) note that investigators ought to judge how well participants remember events, how accurate their social memory is, or how well they remember particular dates and locations. They suggest that one way of checking is by guiding the interview to a discussion of events for which the investigator has a record with which to compare the participants' oral versions. This is not done with the purpose to assess whether people are being honest with their stories, but what types of events and details they recall. In this study, the investigator does not have a record with which to compare the interviews.

Clearly, having steered the interview onto a specific direction would have yielded much different results. There was no specific event, common to all participants and well documented with which to compare their accounts. The phenomenon under study comprises a succession of events differently experienced by each participant. Although the investigator cannot assess the truthfulness of the participants, there is evidence to suggest that their descriptions are genuine. Most participants displayed a broad array of emotions – often painful – during the interviews. Scientific skepticism is welcome. However, facial expressions, body languages, and tones of voice appeared to be consistent with the affect and the stories being told.

Lastly, there are limitations concerning the sociopolitical context in which the interviews take place. Participants were sought and met with the investigator at a time in our country in which undocumented immigrants are referred to as criminals or *felons*. Depending on their country of origin, immigrants might be overtly unwelcome because “they take away jobs from the American people.” They might be perceived as dangerous due to the threat of terrorism. They might be seen as parasites because “they don’t pay taxes” or because “they come here to have babies and take advantage of the welfare system.” The sociopolitical climate in the U.S. today is highly inhospitable toward

immigrants, especially those from Mexico, other parts of Latin America, and the Middle-East. Days like these are not unusual in American history. Similar sentiments have been expressed toward Mexicans before, and toward Chinese, Japanese, and German immigrants. These sentiments eventually evolved into federal policies that violated human rights. This time in U.S. history triggers past unpleasant memories. Not surprisingly, many advocates for immigration policy reform are calling for an Operation Wetback II. In addition to having an impact on the morale of the participants and their families, this situation also made the recruitment process more challenging. For a period of approximately five months, no prospective participants were recruited for this study despite the investigator's frequent communication with gatekeepers.

Although these findings cannot be generalized to other cohorts and cannot replicate or corroborate quantitative studies completed with Mexican immigrants, they allow scholars, professionals, and students to assess whether the transfer of findings to a similar cohort would be possible. Relative to studies on the role of the mother and family dynamics, the empirical literature on fatherhood is still young. While stereotypes about the Mexican father persist, much less is known about those who immigrate. Due to the complexity of this phenomenon and the paucity of research on the relationship between fatherhood and immigration, additional research exploring and documenting the experiences of other Mexican immigrant fathers, mothers, and families in general is warranted.

The Investigator's Lived Experience

This study is an act of intending towards a better understanding of the experience of fathering. Although specific to Mexican immigrant fathers, the findings are universal: all fathers sacrifice something of themselves to ensure the well-being of their children. Such has been the case for centuries. That which is sacrificed often takes the shape of time that the father could have spent with his children. This is one of the ironies

of contemporary life; an irony as old as the dawn of the industrial revolution when the father began to work outside the home and spend less time with his family.

As briefly mentioned earlier, the investigator's focus on this phenomenon is not coincidental. His interest on cross-border fathering was ignited by a conspicuous paucity of research on this population group and their fathering efforts. Consequently, the investigator recognized an underlying attempt to understand his father and his fathering experience as a man who – as a result of having to travel for work most of the time – fathered from a distance. Needless to say, the investigator's father and the participants in this study share common experiences. Further, the investigator and the participants also share similarities. However, this endeavor is not entirely a projection of the investigator's own lived experience or an opportunity to revisit his relationship with his father. This study is not a soul-searching effort; doing so would be an act of self-indulgence. Although any act of inquiry is likely to reflect something of the world in the inquirer, the questions are asked to learn more about the world.

What stand out at this moment of self-reflection are a genuine respect for fathers in general and a deeper appreciation for their commitment to their children's well-being and survival. The participants in this study take their journeys or destinies (*Thrownness*) as pre-given aspects of their natural life-world and – not without stumbling and recovering several times – follow through with resolve and love (*Sorge*). The investigator recognizes his empathy toward those who because of different factors do not fulfill their fathering commitments, and his respect for those who – in spite of society's scripts – decide not to become fathers. Most of all, there is an unequivocal feeling of admiration for those who father in the geographical, emotional, and uncharted and uncertain territories of cross-border fathering in the twentieth-first century and the global existential angst with which it arrived.

This three-year study does not end here. Others will pick up where the investigator rests. *Cross-border fathering: The lived experience of Mexican immigrant fathers* has been and will be a work-in-progress. Each one of the themes that emerge lends itself to teaching others about it and exploring more research opportunities. This moment of intending toward the task of completing this project, is characterized by a timely epiphanic recognition, that is, to give birth to this study and to unfold together with it for years to come, make the investigator a father.

Looking Ahead

Social work has a historic relationship with immigration in the U.S., as exemplified by the work of pioneers such as Jane Addams (1860-1935), Sophonisba Breckinridge (1866-1948), and Mary Richmond (1861-1928), among others. These women were sensitive to the needs of newly arrived families who for the most part were underprivileged and without the resources to advocate for themselves. Since then, waves of immigrants and refugees have continued to arrive; transforming U.S. society in ways that perhaps none of these pioneers ever envisioned. The U.S. continues to attract immigrants and refugees but – once again – the rules have changed. At the dawn of the twentieth-first century, the U.S. experienced events that would change Americans' views of the government and one another, namely, the devastation caused by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001; Hurricane Katrina in 2005; and the sudden fall of the housing market in 2007. Although other parts of the world have long endured deadly natural disasters and violence, these events began to change people's perception of the human experience worldwide.

Within only 20 years after the end of Cold War era, once again our civilization coexists with an underlying awareness of the vulnerability and uncertainty that individuals have come to recognize as part of their natural world. At home, the threat of terrorism, the costly and long war in Iraq, a weakening economy, the declining regard for

the U.S. as a global hegemon, and the discontent with and mistrust in governmental institutions, all contribute to a feeling of loss. U.S. society has lost more than it is willing to admit: a guaranteed permanent sense of invulnerability; civil liberties, thanks to the government's surveillance efforts; and relative financial stability and prosperity, marked by the rise of gas and food prices, and plunging real estate values. Abroad, nations struggle with their own domestic issues; however, as a global culture, the entire planet is struck by concerns about global warming, new diseases, and food shortages.

The High-Level Conference on World Food Security in Rome, in June 2008, drew 30 heads of state from all over the world. It highlighted the fact that nearly an estimated 850 million people in the world today suffer from hunger, of which about 820 million live in developing countries. High food prices may have driven another 100 million people into starvation only in the last few years. The extent to which families are buyers or sellers of food in those countries; the extent to which local prices are affected by global prices; the change in the global prices of particular foods; bad weather locally; and violence or political upheaval, all contribute to increasing poverty and hunger in those communities. Further, those countries are expected to be the most affected by climate change in the years to come (Beckmann, 2008). Mexico is no exception. Looking at its socioeconomic situation almost at the end of the first decade of the 21st century, it would seem as if there is no sign of relief or hope for the poor.

Mexico's Food Crisis and the Border

As a consequence of mounting demands for food in fast-growing countries such as China and India, and the increasing use of corn for ethanol, food prices have risen all over the world. Mexico is one of the most seriously affected countries. Although corn is one of the country's major agricultural products, Mexico now faces a shortage of it. This situation translates into higher costs of meals, especially those made with corn such as tortillas. The price of tortillas rose by more than 50% in many parts of the country in 2007

(BBC, 2007). People took to the streets to protest for this unexpected sharp increase.

Such a crisis is easy to understand when considering that tortillas are the main staple in almost every Mexican family and, most importantly, they are the source of 40% of protein for poor Mexicans.

Protests forced President Felipe Calderón to negotiate a pact with the largest tortilla producers to cap the price of tortillas at 8.5 pesos (\$0.83) per kilogram. Yet, in some areas of Mexico, the price per kilogram went from \$0.63 in 2006 to almost \$1.81 in January 2007. The typical Mexican family of four consumes about one kilogram of tortillas on a daily basis. With a minimum wage of \$4.60 a day in 2007, Mexican families with one wage earner were faced with the choice of having to spend as much as a third of their income on tortillas, or eating less, or switching to cheaper and less nutritious alternatives (Roig-Franzia, 2007). Many in Mexico blame American corn farmers for using their corn to produce bio-fuels (Kennedy, 2008). Ethanol has become more popular as an alternative fuel in the U.S. and is usually made with yellow corn, but the price of white corn, which is used to make tortillas, is indexed in Mexico to the international price of yellow corn.

The food crisis continued into 2008 when the National Chamber for the Tortilla and Dough Industry predicted that tortilla prices would go up again by about 18% during the summer months, as a result of continued rising costs of fuel and corn. In response to the ongoing crisis, in May 2008, the Mexican government announced that it was going to give its poorest citizens a monthly cash payment of 120 pesos (\$11.00 a month or \$0.38 a day) to help them cope with rising food prices. This government assistance is believed to go to 26 million people already enrolled in poverty alleviation programs, but equates to only over twice the national daily minimum wage of 50 pesos (\$4.90) in 2008. In other words, this cash assistance adds only the equivalent of 2.5 days of income at minimum wage to a household's monthly income. It does not represent a significant support. In

July 2008, food manufacturers promised to freeze prices on many of their most commonly consumed products until the end of the year. Although many welcomed the move, they pointed out that the prices of many of the products to be frozen had already been increased, some of them up to 50% (Tuckman, 2008).

The economic crisis in Mexico is severe. It causes millions of individuals to feel increasingly helpless, less capable of supporting their loved ones. It causes them to fear their demise. The ongoing crisis continues to establish the border as a salient aspect of Mexican culture and individual identity as more and more men, women, and children engage in a mass exodus to the U.S. that finds Mexico facing the depopulation of many of its municipalities (Degado Wise & Márquez Covarrubias, 2008).

Unanswered Questions

The great majority of the world's poorest people have suffered a harsh setback. They are surviving by eating less, eating foods of poorer nutritive quality, seeking help from family members and the community, selling small livestock, and pulling their children out of school to look for work. Governments and international agencies are preparing to address this crisis; however, it is unlikely that they will get any help beyond what governments do to regulate and subsidize popular foods. High fuel prices have made fertilizer and seeds unaffordable for many small-scale farmers; so many farmers are unable to plant more to respond to higher prices for what they will harvest. While the issue of world food prices may not be the focus of the media in the U.S., many poor people and the governments of poor countries will be suffering from this change for a period of years (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2008).

In phenomenological terms, this is the pre-given, natural world, of the twentieth-first century. These are the new challenges that humankind is about to face and wrestle with. Common knowledge says that – at least in the U.S. – certain phenomena or events take place in cycles or operate in some sort of pendulum fashion; in other words, sooner

or later the situation goes back to normal, to the way things were before. But, what if the Zeitgeist of the next few decades or hundreds of years indicates otherwise? What if things do not go back to the ways that are known, predictable, and manageable? What if the pendulum does not swing back? What most observers seem to believe and hope is that the U.S. will reach a period of homeostasis. This belief makes sense because history shows that this has been the case – at least since the end of World War II – in the industrialized nations. However, history also shows that the opposite has been the norm in the developing countries where the pre-given, natural world is one of constant struggle, social unrest, high inequality, and political and economic instability.

Considering the aforementioned discussion on major changes taking place in the U.S., Mexico, and in the poor nations, it becomes very apparent that millions of individuals and families worldwide might become immigrants or refugees in the next few years, and that those who already have sought refuge in the developed nations might choose not to return to their home countries. As of today, despite the clear hostility toward undocumented immigrants as evidenced by raids and deportations, and despite President Bush's approval of the Wiretaps Bill in July 2008, the U.S. has an amorphous immigration policy: the fate of 12 million undocumented individuals is still uncertain. The government remains extremely concerned about national security (and border security) without taking a stand to address the issue of immigration and the welfare of marginalized, at-risk immigrant families. The investigator contends that this conjuncture is a sign of difficult times to come for immigrants and refugees all over the world. The industrialized nations, burdened with domestic challenges will impose new restrictions to immigration in order to ameliorate economic crises; thus, perpetuating the current global status quo.

As an example of these most anxious times, in June 2008, the European Parliament enacted laws for dealing with immigration. Under the new rules,

undocumented immigrants might be detained for up to 18 months and face a five-year re-entry ban. It is believed that hundreds of thousands of South Americans work in E.U. countries, many of them illegally performing jobs that many Europeans do not want to do. Naturally, this new law was not well received in Latin America, whose leaders rejected “every effort to criminalize irregular migration and the adoption of restrictive immigration policies, in particular against the most vulnerable sectors of society, women and children” (BBC, 2008). Their position also noted the significance to stand against racism, discrimination, and xenophobia. One president referred to this policy as a “hate initiative” (Schweimler, 2008, ¶ 1). It is amidst such anti-immigration sentiments that the global community, especially the rich nations on both side of the Atlantic, prepares for the major environmental and sociopolitical challenges of the twentieth-first century.

As discussed at the beginning of this study, people migrate because of necessity and also because they want to be close to loved ones who settled before they arrive. The Mexican immigrant fathers in this study immigrated because doing so was the only viable way to sustain their families. It is possible to imagine that several or most of the fathers in this study would have not been able to survive to care for their families if they had not engaged in cross-border fathering. Amidst European and U.S. climates of suspicion toward immigrants, millions of families in poor areas of the world are more vulnerable than they were only a few years ago. Today, migration proves more challenging by limiting the opportunities of those who dare to cross and those who stay home and need to rely on remittances for their survival. These are signs of major environmental and social challenges ahead. It is clearly understood that nations must protect their citizenry. Nevertheless, the global community – especially the rich nations – must find ways to protect their own without putting at risk the lives of hundreds of millions of others.

Social workers and citizens around the world must raise their voices on behalf of those who have no voice and find no alternative to provide for their families other than by crossing borders. They must also advocate in favor of social justice and against corruption in the developing countries so individuals do not experience the compelling need to migrate in order to survive. This study speaks of the factual interdependent relationship that exists between immigration, and the experiences of fatherhood, motherhood, and childhood; an existential predicament that is lived by almost 200 million immigrants all over the world (United Nations, 2005). This study speaks on behalf of 15 of those 200 million individuals, and hopefully invites others to do the same. It does not seek to assess whether this type of father involvement is appropriate or not, or better or worse than others. This study describes how Mexican immigrant fathers perceive their experiences as fathers who migrate to the U.S. in search of better opportunities for themselves and their families. Surprisingly, it reveals much more than what was expected. It reveals that the father crosses more than one border and, therefore, never ceases to cross. His life-world is one filled with crossings of many borders.

Corrido del Inmigrante (Ballad of the Immigrant)

México, mi patria,
donde nací mexicano,
dame la bendición
de tu poderosa mano.

Voy a Estados Unidos
para ganarme la vida;
adiós, mi tierra querida,
te llevo en mi corazón.

No me condenen
por dejar así mi tierra;
la culpa es de la pobreza
y de la necesidad.

Adiós, lindo Guanajuato,
estado en que yo nací,
voy a Estados Unidos,
lejos, muy lejos de tí.

*Mexico, my mother country,
where I was born Mexican,
give me the blessing
of your powerful hand.*

*I go to the United States
in order to earn a living;
good bye, my beloved land,
I take you with me in my heart.*

*Do not condemn me
for leaving my land this way;
it's because of poverty
and out of necessity.*

*Good bye, pretty Guanajuato,
state in which I was born,
I go to the United States,
far, very far from you.*

(Anonymous, 1996)

Appendix A

Lay Summary

You are invited to participate in a research study to learn about the experience of Mexican immigrant fathers in the United States. This study is being conducted as part of my doctoral dissertation at Indiana University School of Social Work. I am asking you to participate because I strongly believe that your thoughts, memories, and feelings about your own experience will contribute to a better understanding of what it is like for a Mexican immigrant father to care for their loved ones in Mexico while living in the U.S. The benefits to you for participating in this study are that you might learn new things about yourself and your family, and you might enjoy sharing your ideas and memories about your journey into this country. In addition, your participation might help others learn more about families like yours. There is the risk, however, that talking about yourself, your family, and your experience might bring up uncomfortable memories and feelings. In the event that those feelings become uncomfortable to such extent that they interfere with your daily life, I will assist you in contacting the appropriate professionals.

I want you to know that I will protect your anonymity and that no one, other than myself, will know about what you share with me. When I interview you, I would like to ask your permission to tape-record our conversations. I will be the only person who listens to our taped conversations. Once this study is complete, I will destroy the tape or, if you wish, I will give it to you. In addition, you are welcome to share with me any photographs, personal objects, your favorite music, or anything else that would help me better understand your experience. I want you to know that I will not ask you to name anyone in those photographs or tell me where they live. I will not ask you to let me borrow or keep any of your objects.

As part of your participation in this study, I will meet with you once or twice. Each interview will last between one and two hours. We will meet at a place that is convenient and comfortable for you and where I can listen to you without distractions or interruptions. As a token of appreciation for your participation, you will receive a \$25 gift card to be used at a grocery store. This card will be given to you at the end of the interview.

Two very important things for you to remember are that your participation is voluntary and that you are free to withdraw at any time. I will ask you several questions. I would like for you to respond with honesty and confidence, knowing that there are no correct or incorrect answers. If I ask you many questions is because I want to understand your experience to the best of my abilities. I am simply looking for you to share with me your experience as a Mexican immigrant father. When it comes to your life, remember that you are the expert. I will be learning from you. Finally, I want you to know that you have my deepest and most sincere respect.

Thank you, very much.

Daniel E. Navarro

Doctoral student

Indiana University School of Social Work

Appendix B

Lay Summary (Spanish)

Usted está invitado a participar en una investigación que me ayudará a comprender a fondo su experiencia de vida como padre e inmigrante Mejicano. Esta investigación es parte de mi educación doctoral en la Facultad de Trabajo Social de la Universidad de Indiana. Le estoy solicitando que participe en esta investigación porque considero que sus ideas, memorias y emociones contribuirán a un mejor conocimiento de su experiencia como inmigrante y padre de familia por parte de la comunidad de Indiana y de este país.

Participar en esta investigación le puede otorgar ciertos beneficios como por ejemplo aprender cosas nuevas de usted, su familia, y su cultura. Es posible que usted disfrute de platicar acerca de su vida, su familia, y su viaje a este país. Su participación puede ayudar a la comunidad a estar mejor informada sobre familias como la suya, su país y su cultura. Existe el riesgo de que al platicar de usted, su familia y su experiencia, usted llegue a sentir tristeza, angustia, o preocupación. Si usted llega a sentir emociones dolorosas o que interfieren en su vida diaria, le ayudaré a contactar profesionales quienes sabrán cómo ayudarlo.

Quiero que sepa que voy a proteger su identidad de forma que nadie más que yo sabrá lo que usted discute conmigo. Cuando yo lo entreviste, le pediré su permiso para grabar nuestras conversaciones. Una vez que esta investigación esté terminada, destruiré las grabaciones o, si usted lo desea, se las daré a usted. Si usted se siente a gusto, usted puede mostrarme fotos, objetos personales, hacerme escuchar su música favorita, o lo que sea que me ayude a entender su experiencia bien a fondo. Quiero que sepa que no le pediré que me dé el nombre o la dirección de ninguna de las personas en esas fotos.

Es muy probable que usted y yo nos encontremos para platicar una o dos veces. Cada entrevista durará entre una y dos horas, más o menos. Nos encontraremos en el lugar que sea más cómodo para usted. Como un gesto de aprecio y agradecimiento por su colaboración, usted recibirá un tarjeta de compras por un valor de 25 dólares. Esa tarjeta puede ser usada en un supermercado. Le daré la tarjeta al final de nuestra entrevista.

Dos cosas muy importante que quiero que usted sepa son que su participación en este estudio es voluntaria y que usted tiene la libertad de dejar de participar en cuanto usted lo considere necesario. Yo le preguntaré varias preguntas. Quiero que usted conteste con honestidad y confianza, sabiendo que no hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas. Tampoco habrá exámenes. Si le pregunto muchas preguntas es porque quiero saber acerca de sus experiencias como padre inmigrante mejicano lo mejor posible. Quiero que sepa que desde mi punto de vista, en lo que se refiere a su vida, usted es el experto. Yo aprenderé de usted. Finalmente, deseo que usted sepa que usted cuenta con mi respeto más profundo y sincero.

Muchas gracias,
Daniel E. Navarro
Estudiante de trabajo social de la Universidad de Indiana.

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

1. Today, you are living in a country other than your home country. How did the idea of migrating to the U.S. first arise?
2. What aspects of your experience as an immigrant father and husband stand out for you?
3. Indianapolis is a long distance from where you were born. When you think about such a long journey, what memories and feelings stand out for you?
4. How did this experience affect you?
5. How did it affect your significant others?
6. What thoughts and feelings about the experience do you recall most vividly?
7. Have you discussed with me all that you believe is significant about the experience?

Appendix D

Interview Protocol (Spanish)

1. Hoy usted está viviendo en un país muy diferente al suyo. ¿Cómo es que usted empezó a pensar en la idea de inmigrar a los Estados Unidos?
2. ¿Qué aspectos de su experiencia como padre, esposo e inmigrante son los más resaltantes para usted?
3. Indianápolis está muy lejos de su tierra natal. Cuando usted piensa en esta distancia tan larga ¿qué memorias quedaron grabadas profundamente? ¿Qué emociones siente?
4. ¿Cómo lo afectó o lo continúa afectando su experiencia de inmigrante y padre de familia?
5. ¿Cómo piensa que afectó a su familia?
6. ¿Qué pensamientos y sentimientos sobre esta experiencia usted recuerda más a menudo?
7. ¿Piensa usted que ha compartido conmigo lo que usted considera que son los aspectos más importantes de esta experiencia?

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Ybarra, L. (1988). Separating myth from reality: Socio-economic and cultural influences on Chicanas and the world of work. In M. B. Melville (Ed). *Mexicans at work in the United States* (pp. 12-23). Houston, TX: University of Houston, Mexican American Studies.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Daniel E. Navarro

EDUCATION

BSW	Indiana University - Purdue University Social Work 2000 Indianapolis, IN
MSW	Indiana University - Purdue University Social Work 2001 Indianapolis, IN
Ph.D.	Indiana University - Purdue University Social Work 2008 Indianapolis, IN

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Adjunct Faculty - Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis School of Social Work: Spring 2003 - Present. Courses taught: Introduction to Social Work, Social Work Practice with Children and Families, Human Behavior, and Social Policy.

Spanish Language Instructor - Indiana University-Purdue University School of Liberal Arts, Department of World Languages and Cultures: Fall 2003.

Spanish Language Instructor - Indiana University-Purdue University School of Continuing Education: Summer 2001.

CREDENTIALS

Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) - Indiana State - 2005

Member of the Academy of Certified Social Workers (ACSW)

Credentialed Sexually Abusive Youth Clinician (CSAYC) - Indiana State 2008

WORK HISTORY

Indianapolis, IN

Director - Children's Bureau Therapeutic Foster Care Program: June 2007 - Present. Responsibilities: program development, continuous quality improvement, program budget, staff education, marketing, training and continuing education of therapeutic foster parents, risk management, advocacy, organization of recognition events, community outreach, and clinical supervision of four therapeutic foster care social workers with MSW degrees and one administrative assistant.

Clinical Supervisor - Midtown Community Mental Health Center, Children's Home-based Services: May 2006 - June 2007. Responsibilities: biopsychosocial assessments, clinical supervision of five home-based therapists with MSW degrees and three case managers, monitoring documentation compliance, ongoing training

and education, outpatient and home-based individual and family therapy, case management, crisis intervention, and ongoing supervision with team's psychiatrist.

Clinician II - Midtown Community Mental Health Center, Family Growth Center: October 2000 - May 2006. Responsibilities: biopsychosocial assessments, outpatient and home-based individual and family therapy with child victims of sexual abuse and other types of psychological trauma, group therapy with non-offending parents, case management, crisis intervention, and ongoing supervision with team's psychiatrist.

Health Educator - The Hispanic Center of Indianapolis: January 2000 - October 2000. Responsibilities: case management, psychoeducation groups and counseling for Spanish-speaking clients.

Case Manager/Qualified Mental Health Practitioner (QMHP) - Midtown Community Mental Health Center, Children and Adolescent Services: January 1998 - April 2000. Responsibilities: case management and counseling in both outpatient and home-based settings.

Volunteer Coordinator - VistaCare Hospice: February 1996 - November 1998. Responsibilities: recruitment, training, placement and supervision of hospice volunteers.

New York, NY

Early Childhood Educator - Vanderbilt YMCA Early Childhood Education Center: March 1992 - December 1995. Responsibilities: support of healthy early childhood physical, social, and cognitive development in a multicultural and child-centered environment.

FELLOWSHIPS

- Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Minority Represented Fellowship funded by the Division of Services and Intervention Research of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH): 2002 - 2003.
- Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Minority Represented Fellowship funded by the Division of Services and Intervention Research of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH): 2001 - 2002.

HONORS

- Phi Alpha Honor Society Kappa Gamma Chapter
- Outstanding MSW Graduate Student Award: 2001
- Indiana University School of Social Work Mondonna Pang Endowment for graduate mental health research: 2001
- Outstanding BSW Graduate Student Award: 2000
- Indiana University School of Social Work Mondonna Pang Endowment for undergraduate mental health research: 2000
- Among the top one-hundred IUPUI students in 2000
- Upper 20 percent of the 2000 graduating class

- Nominated for the Chancellor's Award for Outstanding Undergraduate Research: *Clinical Views on the Assessment and Treatment of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)* in 1999

FUNDED RESEARCH

Navarro, D., & Powers, J. (2002). *Children and adolescents in Indiana state residential psychiatric facilities: Who are they?* Funded by the IN Division of Mental Health and Addictions (DMHA).

PUBLICATIONS

McGuire, L., Kabadaki, K., & Navarro, D. (2004). Sexual Abuse Module. In Hosteter, C., Folaron, G., McGuire, L., Howes, P., Hymans, D., & Kabadaki, K. (Eds.), *Indiana University School of Social Work Child Welfare Modules Online*. http://www.iupui.edu/~childwel/Sexual/Module_Overview-Sexual.htm

Navarro, D. (2006, October). Demystifying the Mexican father. *NASW Children, Adolescents & Young Adults*, 2, 5 - 6.

PRESENTATIONS

Picking up the pieces in the new world: Immigrant children in the U.S. Abstract accepted for the *International Federation of Social Workers World Conference*, July - August 2006, Munich, Germany.

Human trafficking: A spreading global challenge. *The Tenth Annual Doctoral Spring Research Symposium*, April 2006, Indiana University School of Social Work, Indianapolis, IN.

Immigration and adjustment. *U.S.A.-Mexico Binacional Health Week*, October 14, 2005, Indiana Minority Health Coalition, Columbus, IN.

Immigration and adjustment. *U.S.A.-Mexico Binacional Health Week*, October 12, 2005, Indiana Minority Health Coalition, Indianapolis, IN.

The Mexican immigrant father: A new type of father involvement. *The Ninth Annual Doctoral Spring Research Symposium*, April 2005, Indiana University School of Social Work, Indianapolis, IN.

The Latin American family coping with challenges along the journey of migration. *The Seventh Annual Doctoral Spring Research Symposium*, April 2003, Indiana University School of Social Work, Indianapolis, IN.

Assets and struggles of Latino youth within the family and community contexts. *Indiana University School of Social Work Alumni Association Second Annual Mental Health Conference*, February 2003, Indianapolis, IN. Understanding and working with Hispanic immigrant children and their parents. *NASW-Indiana Chapter Annual State Conference*, October 2002, Indianapolis, IN.

Working with Latino families. *NASW-Indiana Chapter 2001 Annual State Conference*, Brown County, IN.

VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT

Volunteer Faculty - University-Purdue University at Indianapolis Department of Psychiatry, Psychology Section. Teach psychology intern students about Latin American culture and mental health. December 2006 - Present.

National Association of Social Workers (NASW), Region 7, Nomination Leadership Identification Committee (NLIC) Representative. August 2008 - Present.

FIELDS OF SPECIALIZATION AND RESEARCH

Immigration and Mental Health
Migrants, Refugees and Displaced Persons
Child Sexual Abuse
International Social Welfare

OTHER SKILLS

Other languages spoken: Spanish, Italian, French